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THE
EARLY RELIGION OF ISRAEL
VOLUME I.



The
Early Religion of Israel

AS SET FORTH BY BIBLICAL WRITERS
AND BY MODERN CRITICAL HISTORIANS

BY

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VOLUME I

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PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION.

THE first impression of this book has been exhausted much sooner than I had anticipated. It would be premature to refer at length to the strictures of critics while the work is still under review; and, since any value that it may possess lies rather in the main argument presented than in the exhibition of details, I have judged it expedient to allow it to reappear in its original form, although I am well aware how much it admits of improvement.

I have no reason to complain of the criticisms the book has hitherto received. Some of them have been far too laudatory; and for the more adverse I was already prepared.

It may not be out of place to remind readers that I am not to be held as committed to all the views which, for the purpose of the discussion, are provisionally not disputed, or as considering certain lines of argument to be applicable only to the extent that they are here applied. The aim of the book is not to vindicate any distinct place for the writer, but to

stimulate the intelligent reader to think for himself; for I still believe that such a reader, though neither a Hebraist nor a trained critic, is quite competent to judge fairly on the main points of the argument which is here presented.

September 1892.

PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION.

THE substance of the following pages was delivered as the Baird Lecture in the spring of 1889. A good deal of matter is here presented which could not find expression within the limits of six lectures; and a division into chapters was found more convenient for the treatment of the different parts. The delay in publication has been occasioned, partly by the occupations of a somewhat laborious office, partly by broken health, which allowed me to take up the work only at long intervals. But, indeed, for other reasons I have not been forward to lay my views before the public. I am quite well aware how the current of opinion on Old Testament subjects is running; and I am not insensible to the fact that, while some may find fault with me for giving up received views, a greater number, and some who are younger than I, will "have me in derision" for not being abreast of the age.

Nevertheless, one must be fully persuaded in his own mind. I have long been convinced that the

substantial value of the books of the Old Testament does not depend upon our knowing their authorship; and I doubt whether we can ever accurately determine the circumstances of their composition. At the same time I am as firmly convinced that, in critical discussions on the Old Testament as these have been conducted, there is much more involved than the dates of books and the literary modes of their composition. Whatever may be said of the "traditional view" on these subjects, it is to be remembered that the "traditional view" of the history of the religion is the view of the Biblical writers; and if it is declared to be incorrect, our estimate of the value of the books must be considerably modified. It is this aspect of the critical inquiry that has chiefly engaged my attention. I have patiently and honestly tried to understand the position of critical writers, to follow the processes and to grasp the principles on which the historical inquiries have been conducted. But I find myself like one standing by the side of a Highland stream, while another more nimble goes over on improvised stepping-stones. He gets over, apparently dry-shod; but I cannot follow him, because the stepping-stones have been submerged by his weight. I look in vain to the critics for a passable road, with a firm bottom, which a man of plain understanding may tread. Many, no doubt, will call me unreasonable or stupid; but it may happen that not a few others are as dull as myself, if they would care to own it.

"Conservatism," it has been said,¹ "is the habit-

¹ Robertson Smith, *Religion of the Semites*, first series, p. 4.

ual attitude of Orientals." One poor orientalist here and there may be pardoned for having so much in common with them, when so many scholars are of another mind. I may plead, as a special excuse for my sympathy, the fact that I spent some dozen years—the years of life also during which one receives the most lasting impressions—in familiar intercourse with Orientals on the very borders of Palestine, where it would have been easy, so to speak, to get models for Old Testament portraits. When I found simple, unlettered people, with crude enough moralities and no lack of superstition, reasoning and talking like Old Testament characters, drawing the widest generalisations from the smallest incidents, and withal carrying about a habit of religion that commanded reverence, it never occurred to me to explain similar combinations or inconsistencies in Old Testament characters by contradictory traditions; nor did it seem at all incredible that a high tone of religious conception should be found in what might appear a primitive and rude age. In reading the Old Testament Scriptures, I seemed to be holding converse with living men; and I came to the conclusion that the best way to understand a book is to be in sympathy with the man that wrote it.

My interest in the subject, therefore, is not primarily of a dogmatic or theological character. I am less concerned to defend a theory than to claim for the Biblical writers—what I think they have not received—fair play. On both sides of the controversy, the books have been wrangled over, as if they had been some legal deed or Act of Parliament, while the

personality of the writers has been left out of view. I am not opposed to criticism, although I am free to confess I do not acknowledge Criticism in the sense in which it is sometimes spoken of, as if it were some infallible science. But I plead for a criticism of a saner sort, such as we should employ in the ordinary intercourse of life or apply to a modern author; a criticism that shall start by admitting that the writer possesses ordinary intelligence, and knows fairly well what he is writing about; that shall then interpret his words in a fair and common-sense fashion, and be bold enough, when necessary, to confess its own ignorance. If some things should be found in these pages indicating that I am incapable of following a critical argument as these arguments are conducted, they will at least be of some service if they stir up the unwary reader to examine the foundations of the arguments for himself. What is scepticism in one age becomes credulity in the next. The critical theory is fast becoming "traditional," and is being accepted by multitudes on no better grounds than those on which the former view became traditional. It is now high time to apply scepticism to the prevailing theory, so that the strength or weakness of its foundations may be made manifest.

After all the following chapters and most of the notes were in type, Professor Driver's important 'Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament' appeared. Though he does not profess to deal with the history, and it was no part of my design to treat of the structure of the books, yet the

two lines of inquiry touch one another at certain points. I thought it better, however, to reserve for this place a brief reference to his work, and not to modify what I had already written before I had an opportunity of seeing his conclusions. These conclusions, I may be allowed to say, are arrived at by a method that is admirable for its fairness in the treatment of details, and its cautious reserve in face of doubtful or conflicting evidence. So far as they relate to the composition and dates of the books, I am not particularly concerned with them; but I note with no little satisfaction statements in various connections which I take as indications that, both on this subject and in regard to the history of the religion, he holds much more moderate views than those of the prevailing school of critics. Thus, for example, he says: "The date at which an event, or institution, is first mentioned in writing must not be confused with that at which it occurred, or originated" (p. 118); and again—"The phraseology of P, it is natural to suppose, is one which had gradually formed; hence it contains elements which are no doubt ancient side by side with those which were introduced later," &c. (p. 148). So, while concluding that "the *completed* Priests' Code is the work of the age subsequent to Ezekiel," he is careful to add the qualification that "the chief ceremonial institutions of Israel are *in their origin* of great antiquity" (p. 135). Whether he would include in this category as many institutions as König accepts,¹ I cannot gather. It would, however, have been more

¹ See below, Note XXIX. p. 517 f.

satisfactory had both these critics indicated precisely on what evidence they rest their conclusions—evidence that would stand the test of such a rigorous criticism as they allow on other matters. Statements such as those I have quoted amount, in my opinion, to a set of critical canons quite different from those of Wellhausen; and Dr. Driver would have been no more than just to himself if he had (as König has done) accentuated the difference.

Some other points, referred to in Professor Driver's Preface, will be found touched upon in the following pages. Thus I have "admitted that traditions are coloured to some extent by the age in which they find literary expression" (below, p. 128; cf. p. 424); and on the literary habit of placing speeches in the mouths of historical characters, I have stated my views at some length (chap. xvi.) I still adhere, however, after reading his remark (Pref., p. xvii), to what I have said in regard to the topographical accuracy of the Old Testament writers (p. 97 ff.), and think that the case might even be put more strongly.

To one other point touched upon in Professor Driver's Preface I feel constrained to refer—the relation of modern criticism of the Old Testament to the authority of the New Testament, and to the subject of inspiration. Were there nothing in dispute but the dates of books, the matter might be allowed to rest as he states it (p. xviii); but a much more serious issue has to be faced than the question what our Lord would have said had He been asked about the authorship of certain books. Without putting a hypothetical case as to what He would

have said, I would ask the direct question, Whether the relation of the New Testament to the Old would be the same—whether Christianity, as a historically developed religion, would have equal value to us—if, *e.g.*, Abraham be “a free creation of unconscious art,” and a great part of the narratives of the Hexateuch “the fruit solely of late Jewish fancy,” and if there be “not a particle of truth in the whole narrative” of something else? It is altogether inadequate to reply to such a question, that “criticism in the hands of Christian scholars does not banish or destroy the inspiration of the Old Testament; it *presupposes* it” (Pref. p. xix). Such scholars would do an invaluable service to the Church at the present time if they would explain what they mean by inspiration in this connection, and define wherein their position differs from that of critics who profess no such reverence for the Old Testament. I can quite well understand the position of one who should say it does not matter whether the Old Testament story is true or not, provided we can draw from it good religious instruction. So in a certain sense one might call the religious novel inspired Scripture. But the Christian scholar must be prepared to meet the objector who insists on meting out the same measure to the New Testament writers; for, in spite of what Professor Driver says (p. xvii), we are dependent upon the evangelists for the picture of the Christ, and, in the field of Old Testament history, critics find room for great “modifications of tradition” within the space of half a century, not to say more. So it is quite inadequate to the

case when Horton, speaking of the Law and Christ's references to it, says,¹ "Now, supposing the book had been compiled actually by His contemporaries, this practical value of it would remain just what it is." For the question recurs, Would the historical value of Christianity remain just what it is?

I have a strong conviction that it is their connection with a divinely guided history, more even than their high tone of teaching, that gives to the Old Testament books their special authority; and for this reason I regard it as most important to determine what the movement and character of the history were. Professor Briggs tells us² that the higher criticism can never determine whether the writings contain the Divine Word; but I think that, inferentially at least, it can. I believe a sober and unprejudiced criticism will show that Israel, at the dawn of its national existence, had a very exalted conception of God and a high rule of duty, and that these things were neither borrowed from their neighbours nor excogitated by themselves. If the inference is legitimate that they must have come "from above," then the writings which exhibit the process of this revelation contain no "cunningly devised fable," but have from their connection a divine character. Criticism, as an exercise of human reason, having come so far, may reverently give place to another faculty with a nobler name, by which divine things are "spiritually discerned" (1 Cor. ii. 14).

¹ *Inspiration and the Bible*, p. 179.

² *Biblical Study*, p. 220.

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EARLY RELIGION OF ISRAEL.

INTRODUCTION.

Attitude of the reader of the English Bible to recent critical studies of the Old Testament—Preliminary difficulties of a technical kind—Attempt to present the argument in a new form—The fundamental matters in dispute are not questions of scholarship—The temptations of specialists—The final appeal must be to intelligent common-sense.

WITHIN recent years there has been such an advance in the critical study of the Old Testament that a perceptible change has taken place in the attitude of ordinary readers toward the whole subject. So long as the matters in dispute were questions as to the age, authorship, and mode of composition of certain books, particularly of the Pentateuch, and these subjects were handled simply or mainly as matters of technical criticism, the general reader, if he did not altogether abjure "unsettling" discussions, was perplexed by inquiries demanding special skill and training for their prosecution, or took little interest in problems which appeared to admit of the most diverse solutions. But since a thorough-going theory was adopted by prominent critical writers, and especially since it was applied in the formal exhibition of the history of Israel

from a new standpoint, the whole subject of Old Testament criticism has assumed a more pressing interest for the ordinary reader. The question of the history of books gives place to an inquiry into the history of a people; and the uninitiated reader is called upon, if not to determine the manner in which certain documents were composed, to pronounce an opinion upon the value of these documents as materials for understanding the course of Israel's religious history. Those who have made a special study of these matters have reached a stage at which they can exhibit the results of their investigations as a completed whole, and challenge the assent of others who have not the ability or the leisure to follow the processes for themselves. Dr. Robertson Smith, in his preface to the English edition of Wellhausen's 'Prolegomena to the history of Israel' (p. viii), says: "In this as in other sciences, when the truth has been reached, it can generally be presented in a comparatively simple form, and the main positions can be justified even to the general reader by methods much less complicated, and much more lucid, than those originally followed by the investigators themselves." The same writer, while insisting on the fact that the matters with which Professor Wellhausen deals "are such as no intelligent student of the Old Testament can afford to neglect," claims (p. vi) that the book referred to "gives the English reader, for the first time, an opportunity to form his own judgment on questions which are within the scope of any one who reads the English Bible carefully, and is able to think clearly and without prejudice about its contents."

To what extent English readers have without prejudice formed their own opinions on the matters in dispute it would be hard to say. There can be no doubt that not a few, while disclaiming all pretensions of being able to appreciate the technical critical arguments on which Wellhausen proceeds, profess themselves satisfied in their own minds that the scheme of Israel's history which he presents is in the main correct. Others, not prepared to go so far, have a general feeling that some reconstruction of the received views is needed; while others again, who have made some attempt to follow the arguments, are unable to come to any decision. It would not be fair to class all who accept the new theory among those "clever superficial men and women who think that everything has been found out, when next to nothing has been found out at all, who disbelieve in Authority, and do believe in 'authorities.'"¹ Yet perhaps the main reason for the ready assent on the part of some, and the hesitancy on that of others, is the fact that these investigations have been pursued by skilled Hebraists and critics, who are naturally supposed to have special means of determining the delicate questions involved. The results are set forth with such an array of learning and with so much confidence that the one class of readers give deference to authorities whom they take to be competent, while the other class decline to assent to a process of reasoning which they themselves are incapable of following.

For, notwithstanding the appeal to the ordinary

¹ Andrew Lang in 'New Review,' August 1889.

reader of the English Bible, a great deal of preliminary investigation must have taken place before that point is reached at which such a reader is able to follow the critic; and much has to be taken as proved, because the process of argumentation is too intricate for those who are not specialists in this department of inquiry. The English reader, on taking up, for example, Wellhausen's book, comes upon a statement like this: "The assumptions I make will find an ever-recurring justification in the course of the investigation; the two principal are, that the work of the Jehovist, as far as the nucleus of it is concerned, belongs to the course of the Assyrian period, and that Deuteronomy belongs to its close."¹ Moreover, he finds himself on almost every page confronted with statements as to earlier and later elements of the same document, and assertions as to interpolations and later revisions; and he naturally concludes that it is from linguistic peculiarities and by purely scholarly processes that such distinctions are made. There is a continual assumption of something which the reader has been no party in establishing, a building upon foundations which are underground. Whether the assumptions are supported by arguments to which he would yield, whether the foundations are securely laid, he does not know. He must therefore either surrender himself to his critical guides, or get perplexed over the mass of intricate details.

It would manifestly be an advantage if the subject

¹ Prolegomena to the History of Israel, p. 13. For brevity, the English translation of this work is in the sequel referred to as Wellhausen's 'History of Israel.'

could be treated in such a way that the ordinary reader would, from the first, be able to appreciate the arguments employed. Since it is he who is called upon to give his verdict, he ought to have some firm ground on which to stand, some standard to which to appeal. If certain critical processes are necessary, those critical canons at least which control the processes should be distinctly laid down and accepted as valid. If certain books, or portions of books, for example, are rejected as unhistorical and untrustworthy, or if certain passages are declared to be interpolations or additions, the ordinary reader ought to be satisfied on what grounds this critical sifting is exercised. If he is told that this is done on scholarly grounds, of whose validity he is incapable of forming an opinion, it comes to this, that the advocate of the theory constitutes himself the judge also, and there is no case for the jury. But it may turn out that the critical processes in question are controlled by canons of whose validity the ordinary reader is quite competent to judge. Either, therefore, the processes themselves and the conclusions drawn from them must be entirely left aside at the outset, or else they must be able to justify themselves to the plain reason of the ordinary reader. It is the advocate's aim to maintain his thesis, but it is the duty of the jury to see that it is sustained on proper evidence. The appeal to the ordinary reader is nugatory unless he is put in possession of a standard by which to judge.

In the following chapters an attempt is made to approach the subject in such a manner that an intelli-

gent reader of the English Bible may not be placed at a disadvantage, and to present the questions in dispute in such a shape that he will be able from the first to follow the argument. This of course implies starting from neutral and undisputed ground. The reader must be prepared to hold in abeyance any prepossessions to which he may have been accustomed: if he is not to defer to "authorities," neither must he rely on bare "Authority." And there are certain circumstances favourable to such a mode of procedure at the present time. For one thing, the heat of controversy in regard to many points in dispute has so far subsided that it has become possible to look calmly at certain conclusions, the bare enunciation of which not long ago stirred up angry feelings. The claim of criticism to deal with such questions has been acknowledged, and ordinary people are able without passion to consider the arguments which are urged in support of theories which may be very much at variance with received views. And then there is this other great advantage, that the modern theory of Israel's history can now be exhibited as a completed whole, and, taken merely as a hypothesis, can be brought to the test of admitted phenomena and facts. "It is always something to be thankful for when, in any department of human knowledge, a hypothesis is adequately stated, defended, and worked out. If it turn out an error, it is an error to which full justice has been done, and which may be finally put aside."¹ The only way, however, in which the truth or error of a hypothesis can be shown, is to apply it to the

¹ A. B. Bruce in 'Present Day Tracts,' No. 38, p. 55.

explanation of actual phenomena—that is, in a case like the present, to bring it to the test of certain undisputed facts of literature and history, in face of which it has to justify itself. Accordingly, the method of our inquiry is to take our stand at certain clearly marked points in history or undisputed phenomena of literature, and to ask what account is given of them respectively by the Biblical writers and by modern historians of Israel. Such an inquiry is not beyond the ability of the intelligent reader of the English Bible; in its prosecution he will be able, at all events, to distinguish between what demands technical skill for its settlement, and what appeals to ordinary sound reason.

The essential and fundamental matters in dispute in this controversy are not questions of “scholarship” at all, in the proper sense of that term. It so happens, as a matter of course, that the men who have gone most thoroughly into these questions have been trained Hebraists; but the bare facts of a linguistic character with which they have to deal, count for very little in the essential questions at issue, as critical writers themselves have confessed.¹ These writers are specialists, it is true, but specialists dealing with matters in which common-sense may follow them, observe their processes, and pronounce upon their validity. Specialists are very prone to become theorists, and a specialist with a theory is a very unsafe guide when questions of evidence have to be settled. Modern critical writers are in the habit of pointing to the shifts which in past times have been

¹ See Note I.

resorted to in order to maintain some traditional theory that was untenable; and too much occasion has been given them to do so. But a little sense of humour might enable them to perceive the ridiculousness of many of the processes carried on in all seriousness in the name of criticism. The Hebrew scholar or trained critic may, by the very possession of his special qualifications, see possible combinations, and suggest possible constructions or emendations of a passage that the ordinary reader would never dream of; and he may combine and transpose and eliminate and amend, and by a triumph of ingenuity bring out a most unexpected result, while all the time perhaps a simple and plain meaning of a phrase or passage stares him in the face, from which, however, he gets away to one quite recondite or fanciful. An old Eastern friend of mine used to say there were people who, when asked "Where is your ear?" would put their right hand over the top of their head and triumphantly seize hold of their left ear. There is an acrobatic criticism, which is more sensational than sensible. The qualifications of the specialist render him peculiarly prone to push a theory at all hazards, when to common-sense it appears manifestly overweighted. Too much praise cannot be given to Continental critics for their perseverance, but perseverance may be carried too far. Some years ago I was amused and instructed by the industry and ingenuity of a waggoner at Leipzig, whose cart, heavily laden, had stuck fast in deep sand. After every ordinary expedient had been tried in vain, he went away, evidently to some distance, and returned with

a powerful screw-lever, by the help of which the wheels were sufficiently raised to admit of the insertion of planks for rails; and so, after a long delay, he drove off without lightening his wagon. Recently I had an opportunity of observing the method of a Glasgow carter in a similar difficulty. He had inconsiderately placed his lorry on soft yielding ground and loaded it with timber from the Exhibition buildings. As soon as he realised his position, he unloaded his cart, drew it on to firm ground a few yards off, replaced the same amount upon it, and drove off in a few minutes. Both men succeeded at last, but I confess I admired the method of lightening the cart when the ground was insecure. When difficulties increase at every step of a hypothesis, it is time to inquire whether the hypothesis itself is not at fault.

One indispensable qualification for pursuing an inquiry like the present, is that knowledge of human nature and sympathy with it which we call common-sense. There is, Matthew Arnold tells us,¹ a *mechanical* criticism which “takes for granted that things are naturally all of a piece, and follow one uniform rule; and that to know that this is so, and to judge things by the light of this knowledge, is the secret for sure criticism. People do not vary; people do not contradict themselves; people do not have undercurrents of meaning; people do not divine. If they are represented as having said one thing to-day and its seeming opposite to-morrow, one of the two they are credited with falsely. If they are represented as having said what in its plain literal ac-

¹ God and the Bible, chap. iii. *ad init.*

ception would not hold good, they cannot have said it. If they are represented as speaking of an event before it happened, they did not so speak of it,—the words are not theirs.” Such a criticism, as he says, is, for negative purposes, particularly useful; and it may be prosecuted so as to bring out very surprising results. But a very ordinary knowledge of human nature and experience of human life will be sufficient to show that conclusions drawn in this way are quite precarious or even repugnant to common-sense. Whatever view is ultimately to prevail in regard to the subject of which we have now to treat, must commend itself to the general intelligence of ordinary thinking people. There are questions raised which are of much deeper than merely antiquarian interest—questions that have usually been associated very closely with the sanctions of religion and with matters of practical life. It is of vital importance that the views held on such subjects should be gained by intelligent conviction. For practical use they are of no more value if received on the authority of scholars and experts than if accepted by tradition or custom. Nor need there be any fear of the result of an appeal on such subjects to the common-sense of reflecting people, who are neither tied fast to a traditional theory nor liable to be sophisticated by plausible special pleading. The verdict may be that views long held require to be considerably modified; it may also be that much that is now put forward as certain is at least very doubtful. But the inquiry, if conducted honestly, can only tend to the advancement of truth.

CHAPTER I.

THE RELIGIOUS CHARACTER OF THE HISTORY OF ISRAEL.

Place of Israel among the nations of antiquity—Land, literature, institutions—The distinctive feature of the history is the religion—Its world-wide influence: modern Judaism, Christianity, Islam—“National religions and universal religions”—As a matter of history the religion of Israel is “something more” than other principal religions—The question is, What is the difference? and for an answer we must go back to the earlier times.

THE history of Israel has attractions such as no other history presents. No nation ever had so wonderful a beginning; none exhibits a more tragic close. The figures that mark the stadia of its checkered history are not the dim shadowy forms that elsewhere meet us in antiquity, but men of warm human sympathy, with strongly marked individuality. The details of the lives of Old Testament worthies have wrought themselves into all literatures, and made themselves the world's possession. People in modern Christian lands are more familiar with the history of Israel

than with the ancient history of their own countries, and feel more interest in the characters of Old Testament story than in the great men of their own nations. The graphic delineations of patriarchs and heroes take powerful hold of the imagination of the old and young in all lands. The missionary to the heathen finds a ready access to the minds of his hearers by means of the simple and impressive recital of the deeds of Israel's great men. And in the battles for religious freedom and national righteousness, reformers have been nerved by the example of Old Testament patriots and prophets to fight manfully for the truth.

The very land which was the home of Israel is unique in its geographical and topographical features. A piece of territory no larger than Wales embraces within itself the climate, natural scenery, and products of lands the most far apart. By its physical features and natural boundaries it is as sharply marked off from adjacent lands, as it is distinguished from any country of its size on the face of the earth. Within this territory, debarred for the most part from the seaboard, lived a people that was contemporaneous with the great world-empires of antiquity, but in true greatness has infinitely surpassed them. Looked at as one of the nationalities of Western Asia, its external history seemed indeed to run a course parallel with theirs. A number of kindred tribes are federated together, and after a time the monarchy arises. Then a schism takes place, and there is a double line of kings, waging their wars and ruling their states very much after the

fashion of the kings around them. The institutions, the priesthood, the ritual, the language of Israel, bear strong resemblances to those of kindred Semitic peoples in their neighbourhood; and finally, when the great world-powers absorb those other nationalities or sweep them away, the Israelitish state is also shattered, and its people disappears from the scene. Yet, looked at more closely, Israel presents a broad contrast to those smaller kindred states, and is in essential points clearly distinguished from the greater world-empires. For Israel has not ceased to exist, and its influence has gone forth into all the earth. The petty nationalities of kindred blood in the immediate neighbourhood have disappeared, leaving scarcely a trace of their existence. The great empires of Assyria and Egypt, whose armies fought across the body of Israel for world-dominion, have crumbled to ruins. The Roman empire, with its iron heel, trampled the Jewish nationality to the ground, but there was a vitality which it could not crush. Greece, like Palestine, was a small country, and its people, like Israel, played a distinguished part in the world's history. Israel, however, had put on record complete annals of its marvellous career before the time that the "father of history" appeared in Greece;¹ and though possessing neither the art, nor the philosophy, nor the science of ancient Egypt, has effected in the world what neither Greece with all these acquirements, nor Rome with its law,

¹ The date of Herodotus is 484-443 B.C.; Ezra came to Jerusalem in the year 458. The pre-Socratic period of Greek philosophy falls between 550 and 430 B.C.; the books of Hosea and Amos date from before the fall of Samaria in 721 B.C.

nor the Eastern empires with their massive force, could accomplish.

Something very distinctive must have been early achieved or acquired by Israel to enable it to remain apart from these nationalities, great or small, and to outlast them so conspicuously. It was something of a more fundamental kind than the ordinary attainments of civilisation—something nearer to the heart of mankind, belonging in a manner to all ages, and destined to last when the strait bonds of Jewish nationality should have been snapped, and when the greatest of world-empires should have done their best and their worst for the human race. By some inherent force this race, set in the midst of the great nations of the earth, and surrounded by powerful empires, not only held its independent national existence, and maintained itself unaffected in the highest degree by world influences, speaking its own language, practising its own customs, observing its own laws, proudly regarding itself as a race destined to highest distinction and even to world-dominion, but even at the moment of its political extinction held aloft the banner of national supremacy and undying hope. Nor have its expectations been falsified. Scattered to the four winds of heaven, trodden down as the mire of the streets, persecuted in strange lands, wandering from end to end of a continent in search of a resting-place, it has remained one in all that constituted its unity before its independence was lost. Even in this cosmopolitan age, when men of every nationality are becoming daily more and more citizens of the world, and when the modern Jew of

Britain, or America, or Germany, or France, makes it his poor boast that he is an Englishman, an American, a German, or a Frenchman, his very speech betrayeth him, and he is classed as a member of the one race which is the scorn of many, the dread of some, the wonder of all. For, as a nation or race, the Jewish people lives on, and has a definite influence on the events of contemporary history; and this though it is a nation without a home and without independent political existence. It is a great thing to have the control, to the extent that they enjoy, of the money which is intimately bound up with the prosecution of any undertaking, literary, commercial, or philanthropic, to be the arbiters of war or peace, the masters of the Exchange. The modern movement against the Jews in some parts of Europe, though it may have its root in the very thing we have indicated, shows also that the influence of this wonderful race is not merely monetary but intellectual. Even if it is their possession of wealth that gives them the advantage, the genius that could create the wealth, and so manipulate it as to maintain pre-eminence, is evidently a power of a high degree. To instruct the world in the worship of Mammon, after having taught it the knowledge of God, is no common achievement. A power like this, without political independence at its back, implies an inner uniting bond of no common kind; and when we ask what that bond is, we are driven back to the earlier history of the people for an answer. The possession of wealth by the race is of comparatively modern origin, brought about by their exclusion from the ordinary trades and profes-

sions, which were practised in the times when they suffered persecution at the hands of Christians. But the bond that unites them is of much older date: they had become a historic people, and had indeed achieved the best part of their history, before their corporate life had assumed this special phase. Persecution had its chief motive in their distinctiveness, and largely tended to perpetuate it.

The bond which united this people and enabled them to achieve their distinction in the world was a religious one; and the specific contribution of ancient Israel to the world's good was the knowledge of their religion. "The foundation upon which, at all periods, Israel's sense of its national unity rested, was religious in its character." "The history of Israel is essentially a history of religious ideas."² The great Eastern empires, by a crushing despotism, welded peoples into kingdoms of colossal size, and prepared a field upon which more civilising influences could have play when the fit time arrived. The people of Israel attained no such empire, and left no such remains of greatness as these empires exhibit. Their territory even at the largest was but small; they remained but a short time in these limited dominions; and their country, when they left it, became a No-man's-land, whose inhabitants at the present day own a foreign master, and have no attachment to it beyond an instinctive clinging to the soil that supports them. Rome gave the world a system of law which remained an active influence

¹ Wellhausen, *Hist. of Israel*, p. 433.

² Stade, *Geschichte des Volkes Israel*, vol. I. p. 12.

throughout Europe after the great Roman empire was shattered. Greece died in giving birth to immortal art, poetry, and science. Ancient Israel, on the contrary, never cultivated art nor distinguished itself in philosophy; and, so far from seeking to influence the great world, kept jealously aloof from its movements. What Israel has given to the world is a literature of a very peculiar kind, intensely national in the first place, instinct with an eloquence and a poetry of its own kind; but above all, and herein specifically different from all other national literatures, permeated from beginning to end with religion. From a very ancient time writers in this nation have set themselves to give the story, and a connected story, of their own rise and growth, to codify the laws, to put on record the words and deeds of teachers and leaders; and whether or not a part, great or small, of such ancient literature has been lost, one feature characterises what we possess, it is of a religious cast, and national only because it is religious. A nation is historical only when it makes history, and a nation records its history only when it becomes conscious that it has a history to record; and therefore the earliest of these records which have this national and religious tone, prove that at the time of their composition Israel had a consciousness of its own significant position in the world, and a belief that its history was worthy of being recorded. "The self-consciousness of the religion of Israel," says Dr. A. B. Davidson,¹ "is a phenomenon almost more singular than the religion itself." Of course it

¹ *Expositor*, third series, vol. vi. p. 165.

is to be admitted that the existence of such writings, when once they did exist, had much to do with the making and moulding of the succeeding history; but the fact of their existing is first of all a proof that the nation was conscious that it had some great part to play.

Yet the religion which was the bond uniting Israel and giving that people their peculiar position in the world, is not a dry system enshrined in ancient documents to furnish study for the archaeologist. Other nations of the ancient world had their religious systems, expounded by philosophers, guarded by priests, supported by the state, adorned with the ritual which the highest art could elaborate. These religions, however, faded from the view of the world with the decadence of the peoples who professed them, and are now painfully restored from forgotten writings and crumbling monuments; and even when recovered seem at best but like distant echoes of the religion of Israel. This, like the people themselves, has never ceased to be in evidence before the world, endowed with endless vitality, and is operating at the present day in a wider field than its first professors ever dreamed of. We know how the religious systems of Greece and Rome crumbled to powder before the preaching of Jewish missionaries, men of little learning and of no social position; and how all that was best in the art and political life of the most civilised nations of antiquity has been made subservient to the spread of a religion which came from despised Judaea.

For not only does the world owe to Israel the re-

ligion of the Old Testament, which for the time was clearly distinguishable from the religions of contemporaneous nations, but to the religion of Israel we must trace back by direct descent the two greatest religions of succeeding times, Christianity and Mohammedanism. These two, with Buddhism, exhibit the highest attainments of the human race in the matter of religion; to them, as distinguished from merely local and national religions, has been given the name of Universal or World religions, because there is something in their character, as proved by their reception and spread, that fits them for peoples of various climes and of various race. Buddhism, no doubt, so far as numbers go, bulks more largely on the map of the world than Islam, yet as a factor in the great world's history it has not had so distinguished a career; it has been more a religion of thought than of action. And then, in its adaptation to the wants of man of every grade of civilisation, of every tribe and tongue, in the spirituality of its teaching and in its living power, Christianity, as the history of the world shows, occupies a place peculiarly its own.

It is a matter of history, which very few question, that both these religions are traceable directly to the religion of Israel.¹ There may be differences in the modes in which the influence is traced, and as to the precise amount of the dependence; but there can be no question that both Jesus and His apostles represented the faith of Abraham as the foundation of Christianity,² and that Mohammed appealed to the

¹ Kuenen, *National Religions and Universal Religions*, p. 56.

² Renan, *Hist. du Peuple d'Israel*, i., Pref. p. iii.

same spiritual ancestor, declaring that Abraham was neither a Jew nor a Christian, but a Muslim.¹ Thus two religions, which have been intimately bound up with the political and social movements of the world, which have subjugated to themselves nations in the foremost rank of intelligence, which have proved themselves adapted to peoples of the most diverse birth and training, and which are at the present moment rivalling one another in the missionary zeal with which they are propagated, are directly founded upon the religion of old Israel, which never was anything more than the religion of a small and isolated people. Mohammed gave forth the Koran as "a warning to all creatures,"² and even in his lifetime sent a peremptory summons, prophet of Arabia as he was, to both the King of Persia and the Emperor of Constantinople, as well as to other minor potentates, to accept the religion of Islam. And the command of Jesus, in fulfilment of which His followers travelled in all directions and suffered every hardship, was: "Go ye into all the world, and make disciples of all nations." But though claiming direct descent from Israel's religion, they have this very point in sharp contrast to it, that they both very soon became universal religions, whereas it remained, and still remains, a religion of one people. We have instances of the religion of Israel coming under the view of other nations, as in the story of Jonah; and there were, no doubt, all along, foreign converts to the Hebrew faith. But never did the religion of Israel set about a propaganda; it was only

¹ The Koran, Sura ii. 60.

² The Koran, Sura xxxviii. 87.

in late times, when the faiths of the pagan world were dying away, that in sickness of heart the religiously minded of the Gentiles became proselytes to Judaism, and found it a stepping-stone to Christianity. Yet though the faith of Israel remained restricted to one race, not only did it by direct genealogy bring forth the two great missionary religions, but it gave unmistakable intimations that the truth which it contained would have world-wide extension. As if conscious, on the one hand, that they were proclaiming imperishable and universal truth, its writers gave the most glowing anticipations of a latter day of glory, when out of Zion should go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem—the word which would lead all nations to walk in the light of the Lord. On the other hand, as if conscious that this truth was for the time held in too narrow bonds for acceptance by all nations, they abstained from pressing it upon the Gentiles, and were content to hold up the witness through the long years of waiting till the fulness of the time should come.

A consideration of such facts as these will have a certain influence on the mode in which we have to approach the religion of Israel, as will be indicated presently. They have been pointed out in the meantime as outstanding features of the subject, which invest the religious history of Israel with peculiar interest, and have always attracted the attention of thinkers and scholars in an uncommon degree. Just as in the New Testament history, where the life of Jesus has been felt to be the key-stone of the whole

structure, writers of every shade of opinion have taken in hand to explain His influence on the succeeding development of Christianity; so in the field of Old Testament inquiry the greatest industry and the keenest ingenuity have been exercised in the attempt to account for the origin of that peculiarly religious cast of thought, which is so observable in the Hebrew literature. The very earliest attempts at Old Testament criticism had their point of departure in dogmatic considerations; and though for a time the labours of scholars assumed a more technically critical and literary aspect, the historical view was never entirely lost sight of, and has of late again dominated the whole process of criticism. Even the works which profess to deal in the most technical manner with the Old Testament books have at their basis a theory of the Old Testament history; and of recent years we have had an increasing number of attempts to set forth the history in a more formal manner according to the principles of historical criticism, till we have almost as many Histories of Israel, and from as varied standpoints, as we have Lives of Jesus. It is not without reason that M. Renan—who, according to his own estimate, would have anticipated the discoveries of Darwin had he given himself in early life to the study of physical science,¹ and who now almost regrets that he had not devoted his lifetime to the history of Greek thought²—after working out for forty years a design of his earlier years to write 'The History of

¹ *Souvenirs d'Enfance et de Jeunesse*, p. 263.

² *Hist. d'Israël*, I., Pref. p. vi ff.

the *Origins of Christianity*,' closes his lifelong labour with the 'History of the People of Israel.'¹

A religion which has had a history like this, and has attracted such attention from investigators, proves itself thereby to have more than common features, and cannot be approached with indifference. It is true that the most of the modern writers who have undertaken histories of Israel make great professions of impartiality and freedom from prejudice. Thus Kuenen in the opening of his 'Religion of Israel' says² : "Our standpoint is sketched in a single stroke, as it were, by the manner in which this work sees the light. It does not stand entirely alone, but is one of a number of monographs on 'the principal religions.' For us the Israelitish is one of these religions, nothing less, but also nothing more." This sounds exceedingly impartial, but he "doth protest too much, methinks." It may be questioned whether this is not an assuming of a standpoint from which it is impossible to give a sufficient account of the matter in hand. If it be indeed possible for one to regard all religions with perfect impartiality as so many phases of man's activity, we may expect from such a one an even-handed treatment of all; but such an impartiality is very apt to run into an equalising and levelling of all. At all events, for those who regard Christianity as occupying a peerless position among the "principal religions," and who have perceived the way in which it appeals to the religion of the Old Testament, it would be vain to pretend to have no pre-

¹ See Note II.

² Eng. transl., vol. i. p. 5.

possession in the matter. It is not necessary that the historian of a country should be a foreigner; and we prefer that a biographer should be one who was intimately acquainted and in sympathy with the person whose character is to be described. A handful of jewels are, from one point of view, just so many minerals; but we should think none the less of a lapidary whose eyes sparkled when he discovered among them "one pearl of great price." A joiner or cabinetmaker may say that from his standpoint three planks of wood are nothing less and nothing more, though one may be cut from the trunk and the others from large limbs of the same tree; and the anatomist may describe simply as so many "subjects" the dead bodies of a mother and her two daughters. From their standpoint they are right enough; the question is as to the standpoint. Religions are not so many things that may be laid on the bench or dissecting-table, so that learned men may write a series of monographs upon them. They are not so many dry systems that can be circumscribed by "documents" and examined in books. No religion that has made its mark in the world can be thus appreciated. Account must be taken of the character of the founders and first teachers, as well as of the doctrines or systems they have left; and above all, the effects of the religion in the world must in each case be estimated, if we would know what the power of the religion is. Now the religion of Israel, by its *very position in the world*, has been "something more" in some sense than other religions. No other religion has had so

striking an origin, so persistent an existence, and so wide an influence, if we take into account the two religions which have sprung from it. And the main question before a historian of Israel's religion is to make plain what the "something more" is. But to set out with a formula or equation that will represent the history of all religions,¹ and then apply it to the religion of Israel, is to prejudge the whole question in a most unscientific way, and to run in the teeth of historical fact. The science of comparative religion is legitimate, and most useful; but it becomes unscientific when it is a levelling science. Stade very properly² assigns to the religion of Israel not only a place among the principal religions, but the very first place,—the universal religion, in a much fuller sense than, *e.g.*, the philosophy of Greece or the law of Rome can claim to be universal. There is enough in the external history of Israel to prepare us for finding in it something very different from what other ancient religions exhibit. Is it impossible that there should be unique things in the world? Is it scientific to assert that there are not? We do not require at the outset to claim more for this religion than for other religions; but neither are we allowed to assume at the outset that it is no more nor better than others. What we have seen is sufficient at least to make us disposed to admit any features that can clearly be proved to exist, even though they have no counterpart in other ancient religions. Since it has, in later historic time, had a unique development, it need be no wonder if in its earlier course it was equally distinguished.

¹ See Note III.

² *Geschichte des Volkes Israel*, vol. 1. pp. 3, 4.

The history of Israel, then, resolves itself into a history of the religion; and the problem of the history is to explain the possession by this people of a faith and practice which distinguished them from their neighbours, and made them the religious teachers of the world. More particularly, it is to the earlier portion of the history that attention has to be turned, with the view of discovering, if possible, a starting-point which will form a sufficient explanation of all that followed.

If we take the modern orthodox Jew with his Talmud and traditions, we can give no account of him, nor understand his persistent adherence to peculiar customs and old-world beliefs, till we go back to the time of the formation of the Talmud itself. And as soon as we begin to investigate that process, we are compelled to go back to Ezra and his contemporaries, who gave the start to the complicated work of the scribes. And when we take up the books that tell us of the activity of Ezra and Nehemiah, and try to account for their influence, we find we are not only at the beginning of one course of development, but also at the end of a long anterior one. A great part of the writings of the Old Testament was by that time certainly in existence; the political history of the nation in its independence had run its course, and its religious character had become well marked. In order to discover how all this was brought about, we are referred to an earlier period of their history. We turn to the great prophets who lived and wrote before the exile, and we find that, while their conceptions of the national religion are clear and posi-

tive, they do not regard the religion as a thing of their own day, nor claim to have reached it by their own study. The very earliest of the writing prophets to whose words we have access, appeal to a series of prophetic men before them who had taught the same truths, and presuppose for the nation of Israel a certain religious standing which rests on an antecedent history to which they pointedly and repeatedly refer. Attempting to make our way still farther back, we find the books which tell of the activity of Moses, the exodus from Egypt, and the consolidation of the people under an elaborate system of law; and we seem to have reached an absolute commencement. But even the Mosaic period rests on an earlier. Moses speaks in the name of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and the same books that tell of the work of the great law-giver are full of references to the covenant and the promise made to Abraham. With Abraham the history of Israel as a people is made by the Old Testament writers to begin. From him the nation is made to descend by ordinary generation; the promise made to him is seen expanding in the succeeding history; and although the writers give an account of ages preceding, and carry their history back to the very origin of things, Abraham is made to stand at the watershed where the national life of Israel has its rise, the "nations" of the world being thereafter left out of account, or only referred to in connection with the fortunes of the chosen people.

What we want to determine is the origin of this peculiarly religious cast of the history of Israel, and

the nature of the religious life which is represented as running this long uninterrupted course. And in order to do this, it is of the utmost consequence to secure a firm standing-ground from which to estimate the precise course of events.

CHAPTER II.

TWO CONTENDING THEORIES OF THE HISTORY.

There are practically two accounts given of the earlier religion of Israel, that of the Biblical writers and that of modern critics, and in vital points they are opposed—The Old Testament books agree, or have been made to agree, in their statement of a scheme—Its outlines—Modern objection to this view that it is an afterthought—Contending theory advanced by critics—Its outline—The contrast—How is the balance to be held between them, since both appeal to the same books?—Proposal to leave aside at the outset the disputed books or portions—Reasons given for this method—Proceeding from the known and admitted to the unknown or disputed—The result will, among other things, determine the value of the books which at the outset are left out of account.

WE have seen that the history of Israel resolves itself into a history of religious ideas. The outstanding events of the nation's history are all invested by the Biblical writers with religious significance; and it is through its religion that Israel is still a power in the world. A history of this people which should be confined to political events would be as unsatisfactory and as uninteresting as a history of Greece which should take no account of art, philosophy, or science. The vital point is to determine,

if possible, what was the nature of the earlier religion of this people.

There are, practically, two accounts given of the history of Israel's earlier religion, between which we have to choose,¹ and they are, in important respects, opposed to each other. There is the account of the Biblical writers, which may be gathered from the Old Testament books. Whatever, and however many, may be the original sources of which the Pentateuch and historical books are composed, and in whatever particulars the various sources may be found to be divergent or discordant among themselves, they all agree, or have been manipulated so as to have the appearance of agreeing, in the main view which they exhibit of the course through which the history ran. These books, in addition to an account of primeval history contained in the first eleven chapters of Genesis, have, in the remainder of that book and in the succeeding books to the end of 2 Kings, a connected narrative of the fortunes of Israel from the call of Abraham to the time of the Captivity; and the books of Ezra and Nehemiah record the events connected with the return. Besides these, there are other writings, particularly those of the prophets, which have for the most part their known historical dates, and are therefore valuable contributions to the Biblical account of the history. Now the account which all these books together give of the history is ostensibly consistent and of one tenor.² It

¹ See Note IV.

² The books of Chronicles are confessedly of late date, and stand in some respects by themselves. Whatever may be said of their historic value in detail, they rest on the earlier books and imply the same general scheme of history.

amounts to this: that the people of Israel, from the time of Abraham, stood in a peculiar relation to God, and received from Him special intimations of His will and character, and were by Him peculiarly guided and directed in their growth into a nation, and in their existence as a state. By a signal display of divine power they were delivered from the bondage of Egypt and led into the desert of Sinai, where the covenant made with Abraham was renewed with awful sanctions. Upon the covenant was reared the law, ordaining holiness on God's people, fencing round their daily life with ceremonial prescriptions, and educating their spiritual life, so that they might be in deed as in ideal a kingdom of priests, an holy nation. Up to this ideal, however, they never came. On the contrary, they sinned under the very shadow of Sinai; and throughout the course of their journey in the wilderness, marked as it was by constant tokens of divine guidance, they exhibited continual backsliding, and fell into one corruption after another. Even when, by signal displays of divine favour, they were brought into the promised land and made victorious over its inhabitants, they sinned against the God who had favoured them, and conformed to the practices of their neighbours. Nevertheless they were not rejected, nor was their education interrupted. A series of prophets, from Samuel's time onwards, arose to testify against them and to plead for a higher life. These men, with one voice, whether in the northern or the southern kingdom, tell the same tale of God's great doings for His

people in the past; they reprove, rebuke, exhort; they confront kings and people, and denounce priests and false prophets alike,—the burden of their message being the same from age to age. Nor do they lose faith in God's promise. As troubles gather about the nation, their reproof of sin becomes more stern, their enforcement of God's righteousness more emphatic, but their trust in His faithfulness remains unshaken. As the fabric of the nation falls to pieces, their views become only the more spiritual, and hope lives on even in captivity. It was indeed the voice of prophecy and the belief in its fulfilment that sustained the captives in Babylon, and stimulated the pious under Ezra and Nehemiah to return to their native land, and there, cured finally of idolatry, to set up the worship of God with punctilious regard to the precepts of the old law, which, during their prosperity, had been slighted.

Such is the view presented in the Biblical books. It involves a plan or scheme of history of a sort. It is a record of a religious movement proceeding in close connection with certain alleged historical occurrences, which to the Biblical writers are of prime significance; so that in their estimation the different stadia in the religious advance are marked by definite events in the national life. I have said that the narrative contained in the Biblical books is ostensibly consistent and of one tenor; and the proof of this is the fact that till recently no one thought that any other account could be derived from these books of what the various writers unanimously meant to represent. Indeed those who in modern times think

they have proved that the course of the history was different, do not deny that the Biblical books, as they lie before us, give the account which has just been sketched. What they maintain is, that the scheme of the Biblical writers is an afterthought, which by a process of manipulation of older documents, and by a systematic representation of earlier events in the light of much later times, has been made to appear as if it were the original and genuine development; and they think they are able, by separating the early from the late constituents of the writings, and by a legitimate process of criticism, to prove from the Biblical documents themselves, that the history and the religious movement had quite a different course.

On purely literary and scientific grounds we cannot at the outset refuse to entertain such a supposition. The books of the Old Testament lie before us as so many literary compositions, and we cannot in advance claim for them such authority as will bar any legitimate inquiry into their origin, and any legitimate criticism of them as literary productions. It is in itself a legitimate supposition that the writers of the Old Testament books, living and moving in a narrow world of their own, took a circumscribed view of their national history, and in a simple unscientific age saw marvels where modern writers would see only natural occurrences. It is also quite conceivable that Hebrew writers of history, like other historians, had their views of past occurrences coloured by the medium of their own time through which they regarded them, and at a comparatively

late time framed a theory of their past history, in accordance with what succeeding events led them to believe it must have been. And finally, it is conceivable that such late writers should for the first time have set themselves to put down an account of early events from their own standpoint, or have touched up older documents in order to make them square with their own conceptions. Whether all this was indeed the case must of course be proved before we accept it; in the meantime we cannot refuse to look at it as a hypothetical account of the matter. Nor need we wonder if, in an age like the present, when the demand is made in every department of investigation for scientific processes and strict verification of facts, the theory of the Biblical writers should be challenged to submit itself to the scrutiny of nineteenth-century examination. Neither need we wonder if men who are trained in the methods of modern historical research, and who have made the religions of the world a subject of special study, have sought to frame a theory of Israel's history in accordance with what they regard as established scientific principles. Of course it will be required of the modern theory that it give a better account of all the facts of the case, and present on the whole a more consistent and credible explanation of the things which are not matters of dispute.

We shall have occasion in the sequel to consider the main points of the theory that has been put forward in opposition to the Biblical one. In detail there are variations in the views held by different writers;

but in a general way the modern theory may be stated as follows: A number of wandering Hebrew tribes came from the desert and found a settlement in Canaan. Like the races around them they had their national God, Jahaveh,¹ who was to them very much what Chemosh was to Moab or Milcom to Ammon; and they possessed certain traditions, variously accounted for, of their origin and of the manner in which He had become their national God: but their religious faith and religious observances were very much of the same kind as those of the nations around them. Particularly from the Canaanites, among whom they settled, and whom they gradually assimilated or absorbed, they adopted many religious customs and beliefs,—appropriating their sacred places, making pilgrimages to their sacred tombs, and ascribing to their own ancestors the honours which were paid by the Canaanites to local heroes departed. Custom grew into law, legend was made into history, and at the time when we have the first authentic records of them, they are practising the rites of a worship which had grown up in the way indicated,

¹ In using this name for the first time, I must make a brief explanation. It is now universally admitted that the traditional pronunciation, Jehovah, which appears in our English Bible, is a mistake. By the time the vowel-points were supplied to the Hebrew Bible the Jews had acquired the habit of saying *Adhonai*, the LORD, wherever the sacred tetragrammaton (JHWH) occurred, and to guide to this reading they wrote the vowels of the name *Adhonai* along with the consonants of the unpronounced name. Taken as a Hebrew name, and vocalised after the analogy of other words of similar formation, the name should in all probability be pronounced Yahaveh or Yahveh. The objection to the use of the form Yahveh or Jahveh is, that the *h* in the middle is apt to become quiescent, and the word to be pronounced Ya-veh, which is a mistake. I may add that whatever objections there may be against deviating from a pronunciation which is invested with sacred associations, there are certain advantages, which will appear as we proceed, in keeping, in a discussion like the present, as near as possible to the original. In quotations from modern writers the spelling of the respective authors is retained. The origin and the significance of the name are considered in the sequel (chap. xi.)

with conceptions of their national God similar to the beliefs of the neighbouring nations regarding their gods. The Biblical books which relate the history up to the eighth century B.C. did not exist in anything like their present form till long after the events; and it is only from early pieces contained in them, or by various inferences, that we can get a true account of the history of that time,—the books in their present form being manipulated by later hands, and exhibiting a projection of later ideas into past times. But by the eighth century we have compositions belonging to that century itself, and from that time onwards literary works come to our aid for the understanding of the history. It was to the prophets that the purification of the religious conceptions of Israel was due. They first perceived and taught the people a higher truth, and by them the ethic monotheism of the Old Testament was developed. Before their time “the nation had been the ideal of religion in actual realisation; the prophets confronted the nation with an ideal to which it did not correspond. Then to bridge over this interval the abstract ideal was framed into a law, and to this law the nation was to be conformed.”¹ In this way the code of Deuteronomy was prepared some short time before the eighteenth year of the reign of Josiah, when it is said to have been discovered in the Temple. This code of law does not therefore belong to the age of Moses, though it is represented as coming from him, to give it higher sanction. It was, in fact, the attempt to frame a

¹ Wellhausen, *Hist. of Israel*, p. 491.

norm for the guidance of Israel in the truth which the prophets had taught. But it had an effect other than its framers had anticipated; it substituted for the free living voice of God speaking through His prophets, the voice of a dead law; and so, without meaning it, the prophets became "the spiritual destroyers of the old Israel."¹ Law, therefore, was the outcome of prophecy, not its antecedent; and it found its ultimate development in the Levitical code of Ezra, which was the starting-point of modern Judaism.

Without entering now into any discussion of the points here raised, we may observe that this theory professes to expound the history of Israel according to the principle of a continuous natural development, showing the gradual expansion of the religious idea from the narrowest conceptions of nationalism, or even animism, to that of a pure monotheism, and the rise of religious institutions from mere natural custom, often the most superstitious, to codified law with divine sanctions. Stade, a distinguished advocate of the modern view, says² we must at the outset regard the religion of old Israel as *in the process of becoming*, and not entering the world in a completed form like Christianity or Mohammedanism. Christianity, he says, appears as a completed religion, just because it is the conclusion of the religion of Israel; but we must not apply to the religion of Israel the maxim of Schleiermacher, derived from a consideration of Christianity, that a religion is seen in its greatest purity at its source.³ On

¹ Ibid.

² *Geschichte des Volkes Israel*, vol. i. pp. 8, 9.

³ See Note V.

which it may be remarked, that whatever mistakes may have been made on this subject in the "traditional view," the Biblical records themselves indicate very clearly a development of its kind. The great difference in the two theories consists in the germ from which the development took place, and the stage of evolution that had been reached in the earlier times whose history we seek to determine.

We have, therefore, two opposing views of the history—the Biblical view, set forth by the Hebrew historians, and the view formulated by the modern historians of Israel. The latter does not hesitate to call the former unhistorical, and might itself therefore be called the anti-Biblical, though I shall simply call it the "modern theory." I have called them two contending *theories*, for so they are. The Old Testament historical books are not bare chronicles of events. They are animated by a principle, in accordance with which the writers profess to explain the events. If we suppose the accounts of early times to have been written early, or if we take the very earliest of the written sources which the critics will admit, even then they are more than bare recitals of facts. There is ever a certain interpretation of the facts, a certain view taken by the narrator which colours his facts or guides the disposal of them in his recital—a certain insight, true or false, which he thinks he has into the secrets and *causes* of things. If, again, we suppose that these accounts of early times are written late, the accounts again imply reflection, interpretation, theory. In any case, there is more than the mere representation of

facts. "History, as distinguished from chronicles or annals, must always contain a theory, whether confessed by the writer or not. It may not be put prominently forward, but it lurks in the pages and may be read between the lines. A sound theory is simply a general conception, which co-ordinates and gives unity and a causal relation to a multitude of facts. Without this, facts cease to have interest except to the antiquarian."¹

The state of the case is this: The history of Israel ran through a course of development of some kind. The Hebrew writers had some knowledge of the events and crises of the history, from personal experience, from oral tradition, from conviction engrained in the national consciousness, or from written sources; and they set themselves, at the time or at some time, to give an ordered account of the events. But in any case, it is *their* view of the history that lies before us. Modern writers also have knowledge of certain events. From the writings in our hands, and from other sources, they have information of the crises and outstanding facts. They have also before them in these books the views that the Biblical writers entertained, and on the strength of all these they write their histories of Israel. But, again, it is *their* interpretation of the events and phenomena that lies before us. The date of the written history in either case does not *in itself* affect the validity of the theory. Writers of this nineteenth Christian century claim that they have the true account to give of the matter, although they have

¹ Simon S. Laurie, *Rise and Constitution of Universities*, Pref. p. vi.

practically no additional *facts* to go upon. We can not therefore allow them, on the mere ground of *lateness*, to reject a theory which, let us say, was framed a few centuries before Christ. It may be that the early theory had the more accurate insight and gave the more correct interpretation of the facts of the history. The question simply is, Which of the two theories gives on the whole the better explanation of all the circumstances which are known and admitted? There is a sort of higher criticism in either case, but the theory that is to hold the field must not only raise difficulties but must lay them, and must, on the view of all the facts of the case, commend itself, on literary and critical and common-sense grounds, as the better explanation. There is something worth thinking of in the words of Thoreau: "How comes it that history never has to wait for facts, but for a man to write it? The ages may go on forgetting the facts never so long; he can remember two for every one forgotten. The musty records of history, like the catacombs, contain the perishable remains, but only in the breast of genius are embalmed the souls of heroes. There is very little of what is called criticism here. It is love and reverence, rather, which deal with qualities not relatively but absolutely great; for whatever is admirable in a man is something infinite, to which he cannot set bounds. These sentiments allow the mortal to die, the immortal and divine to survive."¹ Now the Hebrew writers were very far from being dry annalists, and it is quite possible that they, like

¹ Review of Thomas Carlyle.

the evangelists after them, possessed those sentiments of love and reverence which qualified them for being true historians.

Some of the outstanding facts which have to be accounted for have already been mentioned, such as the persistence of the race and religion, the early consolidation of the people around their religious faith, and the power of this faith to produce two of the greatest religions of the world. Other features will meet us as we proceed, such as the high spiritual tone of the religion, as early as we can obtain contemporaneous accounts, and the influence of the prophets, which, on either theory, is immense. For all these things there must be found, if possible, an adequate cause and sufficient historical explanation. And even if the accounts contained in the Biblical books are pronounced unhistorical, we have before us a very difficult problem—viz., to explain how, at what time, and from what causes arose the conviction which these writers so firmly hold, that this was the true course of events. The Biblical historians say, “We write thus, because thus things occurred.” If the anti-Biblical historians say, “Things did not so occur,” they are bound, among other things, to give a reasonable explanation why the Biblical historians so wrote.

In a general way we may contrast the two theories thus: The modern theory undertakes to trace the development of the religion from the lowest stages of animistic worship up to ethic monotheism, and from custom up to authorised divine law, and this too within the period distinctively embraced in

the history of Israel as a people. The Biblical theory also posits a development; but the essential things which were finally reached—a belief in a moral deity, the one ruler of the world, and a law divinely given—are there in germ and substance to start with at the threshold of the nation's life. There are low stages of belief, there are customs rising into laws, on both theories. The difference lies in the place assigned to them.

These are the two theories of the history, and we have before us a mass of literature which gives the sole or the main information which we possess regarding it, and from which, therefore, is to be obtained in some manner the only standard by which the two theories can be tested. The one theory has, let us say, overlaid itself upon the books, or worked itself into them; the other has, by critical processes, worked itself out of them. How shall we hold the balance between them? Clearly we must approach the subject by its literary side: we must neither, on the one hand, invest the books as a whole with authority and claim for them inspiration, for that would be to foreclose the whole inquiry, as it would be opposed to the principle of Protestantism;¹ nor must we, on the other hand, summarily reject books or portions of them on merely subjective grounds, saying that such and such parts represent later and unhistorical views, or arbitrarily set aside as unhistorical everything in which there is a miraculous element. The books are our only witnesses—the only materials we have for forming our conclusions.

¹ See Briggs, *Biblical Study*, p. 106 ff. ; Whither? p. 73 ff.

This has been well put by Kuenen himself: "The Bible is in every one's hand. The critic has no other Bible than the public. He does not profess to have any additional documents, inaccessible to the laity, nor does he profess to find anything in his Bible that the ordinary reader cannot see. It is true that here and there he improves the common translation; but this is the exception, not the rule. And yet he dares to form a conception of Israel's religious development totally different from that which, as any one may see, is set forth in the Old Testament, and to sketch the primitive Christianity in lines which even the acutest reader cannot recognise in the New."¹ Since, however, the critics undertake so much, we must stipulate that their criticism shall be fair. They must not criticise the books away altogether. The books are the materials out of which the structure of the history is to be built, not a mere scaffolding, within which out of other materials—say of a purely subjective character—the building is to rise. When all is done, the books should appear more valuable as parts of a compact whole; and even the late parts, when proved to be late, ought to fall into their proper place, and add symmetry to the structure.

Here than, manifestly, a difficulty in procedure presents itself. The Biblical theory is formulated in the books as they lie before us. The modern historians do not deny this, but maintain that the parts of the books in which the theory finds expression are not trustworthy documents, but are of late origin,

¹ *Modern Review*, July 1880. *Comp. National Religions, &c.*, pt. 69.

and give expression to late views. Both theories profess to be supported by the same books, but they imply different views of the books.

In order to have a clear point of departure and a fair start in the inquiry, it is essential that there should be some position on which both parties in the controversy are agreed, if only for a moment, before diverging so widely as they ultimately do—some determinative fact or facts which shall not be disputed, the evidence of which shall neither be assumed in advance nor called in question at a later stage. If certain witnesses are suspected, we must either sift their testimony, or fall back upon witnesses whose word is beyond question.

Now the main point in dispute is as to the history of religious belief and practice in the earlier period, particularly the period from Moses to the time when, as is admitted on both sides, we have the contemporary writings of prophets. But this is the very period as to which the modern theory says the books give no reliable history. The narratives contained in the Pentateuch, which ostensibly exhibit the earlier phases of the religion, are, they say, not history at all, but merely an account of what later writers fancied the early history must have or should have been, and represent only *their* views, and reflect their times. It might seem, therefore, a natural course at this point to set ourselves to a critical examination of these productions in particular, so as to eliminate from them the credible element, in the shape of a substratum of fact, and thus obtain reliable materials for that period of the history.

This, in fact, has been the method usually followed by those who have undertaken recent histories of Israel—to criticise or verify the sources. It is a tedious, and in some respects a dreary process, as may be seen by turning over the pages of such a work as Kuenen's 'Hexateuch.' How far the critics have been successful in their work I shall not now stop to inquire, because, in order to reach the end before us, I believe that there is another and surer way, which will enable us to dispense with so laborious an investigation. There are three practical reasons which I think sufficient to justify the course which I propose to pursue. They are these:—

1. The merely critical process of examination of the documents in question is not decisive for the purpose of giving us an undisputed starting-point. Even if it be granted that critics have succeeded in separating the component parts of the Hexateuch, there remains the determination of their order and respective dates, and the degree in which they are dependent one upon another. When it comes to the settlement of these points, recourse is had to a hypothesis of the manner in which the development of the history took place; and different critics, even when they agree in the main as to the separation of the sources, give very different accounts of the time and manner in which they came together. Kuenen himself admits the point for which I am contending. In giving a history of the criticism, he says that up to the time of Bleek, when critics sought on purely literary grounds to determine the order of composition of the sources, there was no certain result attained; and

that it was only when the aid of "historical criticism" was called in that an arrangement of these was possible.¹ The most striking proof of the matter is, that one element of the Hexateuch, the so-called fundamental writing or priestly document, which was on all hands set down as the earliest of the sources, is now by the Grafian hypothesis made the very latest; and the only reason for this change of view is the introduction of the hypothesis as to the course of the history. There is thus always a certain amount of reasoning in a circle, the theory of the history being introduced to determine the dates and orders of the documents, which otherwise could not be determined; while the books themselves, rearranged according to this hypothesis, are appealed to as proofs of the new theory of the history. Of course it is maintained that the theory of the history can be and is proved on other grounds; that the succession of the elements in detail is fixed by "reference to an independent standard—namely, the inner development of the history of Israel, so far as that is known to us by trustworthy testimonies from independent sources."² So be it; we shall see by-and-by on what independent ground it rests. My point at present is, that we cannot at the outset debate it on the ground of the Pentateuch, where confessedly it cannot be settled.

2. The Biblical theory does not depend upon the authorship and mode of composition of the Hexateuch. It is indeed often assumed on both sides

¹ Kuenen, *The Five Books of Moses*, a Lecture delivered at Haarlem, 1870, translated by John Muir, 1877, p. 7 f.

² Wellhausen, *Hist. of Israel*, p. 12.

that it does; and the critics usually combat "the traditional theory,"¹ as it is called, on this subject. It is important, therefore, that we should see exactly how this matter stands, so that the Biblical theory may have fair play, and may not be weighted with what is not a part of it.

It is certainly the case that the tradition of the Jewish Synagogue, followed without scrutiny by the Christian Church, was to the effect that the Pentateuch was substantially written by Moses. By the time that the books of the Old Testament were collected into a Canon—how much earlier we cannot tell—the five books forming the Pentateuch had come to be spoken of as the Law of Moses, or the Book of the Law of Moses. This was natural enough, since they contained as a main element the Law which the nation accepted as of Mosaic origin. These books have indeed as much right to be called the books of Moses, as the books of Joshua, Judges, or Samuel to be named as they are. Whatever may have been the view of those who first collected the Canon as to the share Moses had in the composition of these books, in point of fact we find the Jewish tradition on this subject, as early as we can trace it, assigning to him the authorship. The time of modern literary criticism was not yet, and probably those who gave utterance to the dictum did not think what it involved. In proof of the loose way in which the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch was held, we may refer to the tradition, equally persistent and not considered inconsistent with the other, that Ezra "restored the Law;"² or even to the belief current

¹ See Note IV.

² See Note VI.

at an early time that he re-wrote the whole Old Testament.¹ The account which the Talmudists give of the composition and authorship of all the books, shows how little they actually knew about the matter. The truth is, that the tradition was of a general kind, and the matter is one in which we cannot rely on tradition for the preservation of exact details. And so the Christian Church, in accepting the canonical books of the Old Testament, accepted also without question and without reflection the current traditions as to their authorship. In point of fact, however, the books of the Pentateuch, like the historical books which follow them, are anonymous. The book of Genesis gives no hint of its authorship, neither does the book of Leviticus; and the few passages found in the other books which speak of Moses writing such and such things "in a book," will be discovered on examination to refer to certain specific things. Indeed the very fact of such expressions occurring within the books may even be taken as a presumption that it was not he who wrote the whole.

The "traditional" adherence to the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch has caused no little confusion. For when it was seen that there were certain things that could not possibly have been written by him, and when the composite character of the books was pointed out, it was thought that the credibility of the books was destroyed; alarm was felt on one side lest the authority of Scripture should be undermined, and on the other side it was triumphantly asserted

¹ See Robertson Smith, *Old Testament in the Jewish Church*, p. 155,

that the books were of no historical value because they were not contemporary compositions. Both positions are untenable. (1.) The historical value of these books does not depend on their being written by Moses, or indeed on our knowing who the author was. Suppose the books had borne on their face that Moses was their author, the books themselves give us almost all the information we possess as to Moses; and from them, therefore, alone, we can judge whether he was likely to give us a true history. We should be again reasoning in a circle; proving the truth of the books on the authority of Moses, and proving the existence and activity of Moses on the authority of the books. And if the credibility of the books is to be made dependent on our knowing the author, on what grounds are we to believe the succeeding books whose authors are entirely unknown? (2.) On the other hand, the critics would not have been likely to accept the statements of books such as these are, even had it been proved that they were written by Moses or some contemporary of his. They would have reserved to themselves the right of rejecting or accepting on internal grounds the history recorded. For example, Kuenen, speaking of Islam, laments the deficiency of information just at the points where it would be most valuable, and says "the tradition is coloured throughout by the dogmatic convictions of the first believers, and is often open to the gravest suspicion."¹ Just so; even if it were demonstrated to a certainty that Moses wrote the Pentateuch, that would not make the

¹ *National Religions*, p. 10 f.

critical school a whit more ready to accept its statements. The course of New Testament criticism furnishes an illustration of what is possible in a case like this. Though the Gospels are proved to be of so early a date that the writers could have had knowledge of the things they profess to relate, the modern advanced critics of the New Testament do not feel themselves bound on that account to receive the books as historical. They have to make allowance for the bias of the writer even when the writer is a contemporary; and if he relates events which they consider cannot have occurred, his account is rejected as incredible. Critics of the Old Testament are in the habit—as we shall see—of treating documents and writers in the same way, altogether irrespective of whether these are contemporaneous or not; and therefore little value should be placed on a contention coming from their side, that if the Mosaic origin of the Pentateuch is disproved, its historical value is affected. In other words, critics would not accept the Pentateuch as historical, even if it were proved that Moses was the author.

It seems to be too readily assumed and too readily admitted, that contemporaneousness and credibility of documents are necessarily inseparable, or to be inferred as a matter of course one from the other. A moment's reflection will show that an event may have historically occurred, and that we may have good evidence of it, even although no account of it was written down at the moment of its occurrence; as also that false statements in regard to certain matters of fact may be made, and put on record at

the time of the actual occurrences. The mere writing down of these at the time does not make them credible, nor does the omission to write those make them incredible. Assyrian and Egyptian kings may lie upon stone monuments—very probably they did—in regard to events of their own day; and Hebrew historians may tell us a true story of their history though they wrote it long after the events.¹

The point to be established is, that for the Biblical theory of the history it does not matter who wrote the historical books. The theory does indeed imply that those books contain true history; but its acceptance of the facts does not depend on a knowledge of who wrote them down; for on this point the books themselves are for the most part silent. Moses may have written much, or may have written little, of what is contained in the Pentateuch; it will remain unknown who were the authors of the succeeding books: our knowledge of these things would not necessarily guarantee the history. The Biblical theory, as an account of the manner in which things took place, does not stand or fall by the determination of the contemporaneity of documents, and the modern theory certainly has no higher claim to the possession of contemporary sources for its support.

3. And thirdly, the modern theory, like the Biblical, is now formulated in such a shape that it can be taken as a whole, and tested on grounds that lie apart from questions of the authorship of the books of the Hexateuch. There are certain admitted facts; at a certain point we come upon ground that is un-

¹ See Note VII.

disputed; some outstanding facts and phenomena of the history are before us; and each theory in turn gives its account of the origin and significance of these facts and phenomena. At a certain time we emerge upon the ground of admitted history, when contemporaneous writings come to our aid, for the determination of conditions and circumstances which have a clear significance for the history; and it becomes possible by an examination of the two theories to determine which of them answers the more accurately to those conditions and circumstances, and so fits in the more accurately to the course of the history at a point which is undisputed.

What is here proposed, therefore, is to leave entirely out of account in the first place those books or parts of books which are declared to be unhistorical, and to come to a time at which both theories agree that we are on clear historical ground. The critical historians shall be allowed, provisionally, to indicate what that period is; they shall also be allowed to indicate the writings which belong to that period; and without passing judgment upon the selection, but merely viewing the whole theory as a hypothesis, we shall leave challenged witnesses entirely in the background, and question those who are brought forward as trustworthy. We shall try to discover what testimony they afford in regard to certain distinctive points of the two theories, and to find in which direction the truth lies. There are certain great turning-points, and outstanding phenomena which are explained differently by the two theories. So far as these fall within a sphere where we have trust-

worthy evidence, we shall examine the witnesses as to their significance, and in every case shall seek to proceed from the known and admitted to the less known or unknown or disputed. We shall not claim authority or inspiration for any of the writings, but shall insist that they be taken in *bonâ fide*, and interpreted by a fair and common-sense criticism. If the claim to authority is not pressed on the one side, the claim of subjective or theoretical criticism is to be disallowed on the other. We must have *some bona fide* witnesses to start with, or no progress is possible. If the only witnesses available turn out to be unworthy of credence, it is difficult to see how any conclusion at all can be arrived at which may be regarded as safe.

By thus testing the two theories according to a standard which is accepted, and on ground which is undisputed, we shall obtain some means of estimating the value of those other witnesses also, who at the outset are held in the background. For if the Biblical theory can sustain itself on independent ground, it is evident that those challenged witnesses who are in its favour will have to be regarded as credible testimony; in other words, if apart from the historical books which are disputed the Biblical theory is established, then those books or portions of them which proceed on the Biblical theory fall into their proper place as history. If by purely historical inquiry we can determine the main line and trend of the history, then it will be safe to criticise the documents by literary methods, so as to determine earlier and later elements, separating duplicates, and so

forth, but always with regard to the historical line that has been ascertained. This is more scientific than positing a hypothetical line of development, and then trying to make the materials square with it, or arranging them to suit it. If it is only on the basis of a historical criticism that the arrangement of the materials can be made, the historical scheme should, if possible, be determined on independent grounds, and not put forth at the outset as hypothetical.

CHAPTER III.

WRITINGS OF THE NINTH AND EIGHTH CENTURIES B.C. AS LITERARY AND AS RELIGIOUS PRODUCTS.

The limitations imposed on our inquiry compel us to find a neutral and undisputed starting-point—We accept the century 850 to 750 B.C., within which fall the earliest writing prophets, as well as certain other compositions which are assigned to this period—Value of contemporary documents—Enumeration of the writings admitted, and statement of the problem—First of all, the existence of a varied literature in this one century has to be explained—Writing implies reading and education of some kind and duration—Secondly, as religious products the writings call for explanation—The utterances of the earliest writing prophets, and their being addressed to the people, inconsistent with the idea that it is a time of rudimentary religious ideas—Conclusion that this period is neither the earliest literary age nor the time of commencement of the prophetic religion.

IT follows, from the limitation we have set to our inquiry in the preceding chapter, that we cannot now proceed, as would otherwise be convenient, to trace the history of the religion of Israel downwards in a connected way from the earliest times. We must take our stand, at the commencement of our inquiry, upon common and undisputed ground. In order to have such a starting-point, we fix upon the period

when the modern historians say we have authentic written information—viz., the period within which fall the earliest writing prophets, Amos and Hosea. With them we have contemporary accounts, so far as they go, of the religious beliefs of Israel; and from their writings as well as other compositions, which we are allowed to use as belonging to about the same age, we shall obtain, in the first place, those views, at least, which writers of that time held. And then, from the known and admitted, we must seek to determine, as best we can, the unknown or disputed. The discussion will thus be very much simplified; for it will not be legitimate for either party to take shelter behind any preconceived theory, either of the inspiration, authority, and sequence of books, or of a certain course of historical development. If there is a disadvantage in being deprived of contemporary written authority for an early period which we wish to determine, the disadvantage will lie equally against both sides. We shall be compelled to fix our attention on certain facts which are admitted, and by a process of inference, which must be closely watched, to make our way back to antecedent facts and situations.

The value of contemporary writings in a discussion of this kind is immense. From them we obtain a firm ground from which to start, for we derive information as to the conditions of thought and life at the time of the writers in hand. We are enabled to perceive not only the ideas of the writers themselves, but the conceptions and practices that were current in their time, so far as the writers have occasion to touch

upon them. The writings of the prophets are in this respect particularly valuable; for these teachers were pre-eminently men of their time, addressing themselves directly to the situations in which they were placed, and appealing to the consciousness of the people by whom they were surrounded.

It would be a mistake, however, to limit the value of contemporary writings to the mere information they give in regard to contemporary conditions. A writer is indeed the child of his age, but his age is the product of antecedent influences; and unless we can from contemporary writings find our way by safe inference to the causes that exerted them, we shall never make any progress. Histories of Israel written in this nineteenth Christian century reflect the spirit of the age; but their authors would not like to have them set aside as merely the afterthoughts of modern speculation projected backward into a distant time. And the writings of prophetic men, in the same way, are more than the expression of their own reflections. We must account for the turn which their reflections took, for the standpoint which they had reached; the men and their writings are historical facts which are to be historically explained. And as they were not ostensibly historians, any information they give us as to the history will be the more free from suspicion of tendency or bias.

The great point in this discussion is to determine as clearly as possible the religion of Israel in the period preceding the earliest writing prophets. This period is frequently spoken of in modern works as the "pre-prophetic period"; but this mode of speak-

ing requires qualification. To say the "pre-prophetic" religion of Israel, is liable to involve the assumption that the writing prophets differed in their teaching from those that preceded them, which is just the point in dispute. We are not entitled at the outset to assume that the prophetic period, as a stadium in the religious history of Israel, begins with the prophets whose writings have come down to us; and therefore the expression, although convenient in some respects, should not be employed without this necessary qualification.

Let us now endeavour to gain some idea of the period at which we have agreed to take our stand, and which may be roughly stated as the century 850 to 750 B.C. Though it is maintained that this is the earliest historical standing-ground in Israel's history, it is, according to the Biblical account, comparatively late; and in point of fact, it is not disputed on the other side that a great many important historical events had already happened. By the eighth century before Christ, the northern kingdom of the ten tribes had reached the culmination of its greatness, from which it rapidly declined to its fall. Amos prophesied in the time of Jeroboam II., in the first half of the eighth century—*i.e.*, before 750 B.C.; and Hosea probably lived till near the ruin of the kingdom. Though the books of the Kings were not written till long after, and therefore cannot, with the limitations we have imposed upon our inquiry, be relied upon for the *interpretation* they put upon the events, yet the succession of rulers in the two kingdoms as the books give them, as well as

the separation of the two kingdoms in the reign of Rehoboam; and in general the simple facts of the history as there recorded, are accepted. Moreover, there are certain compositions which are admitted as existing in or belonging to the same age. The stories of the patriarchs as given in the Jehovistic portions of the book of Genesis;¹ the accounts of the doings and sayings of Elijah and Elisha which have become embodied in the books of Kings, are admitted to have been committed to writing in this period; and though they are not to be accepted as history—the stories of the patriarchs in particular—yet they may be taken as embodying the ideas of the men who committed them to writing, and they are thus at least materials for judging of the views which at this time were entertained. Furthermore, it is not denied that in the book of Judges—later editorial interpretations excepted—we have a pretty accurate description of the time to which it refers; and that the books of Samuel—later glosses again excepted—relate certain facts as to the activity of Samuel, and the setting up of the kingdom. Lastly, although the book of Deuteronomy was not yet in existence, nor the Code of Laws and accompanying narrative of the books of Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers, yet there existed a brief written Code, the so-called Book of the Covenant contained in Exodus xx.-xxiii. It is, however, necessary to add, that though these writings are admitted to belong to the periods respectively stated, their historical value, it is maintained, can only be determined by

¹ See note VIII.

the most careful criticism; and historical critics are very much divided among themselves as to the positive residuum of truth underlying them.

These then, roughly speaking, are the authorities at our disposal for the inquiry. Later writings, of course, which are undisputed, such as the prophecies of Micah, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and bare facts of history which are not denied, may be referred to if there is occasion. But we are not to appeal to those so-called later "summaries" or reviews¹ of the history, and what are regarded as interpretations of it in the light of later ideas, which the Biblical historians have, in certain places, superimposed upon earlier authentic documents. The ultimate point we wish to determine, by the aid of these authorities, is this. What actually was the religion of Israel, in its various aspects of belief and practice, in the times *preceding* the authorities to which we appeal, and how far back can be traced the beliefs which we find prevailing in undisputed historic times? And the only way, it seems to me, by which we can reach a settlement of this question is to determine, in the first place, what the undisputed authorities say for themselves, as to their own time, and then by inference to work our way back to an earlier time and condition of things.

Having restricted ourselves to the very narrowest grounds, we need not expect to find full information on all the points which we desire to determine. We may have to be content with brief hints, and may have to draw our inferences from a few texts. In

¹ See below, p. 116.

any case, we shall have to be satisfied with general conclusions. But, by shifting our point of view, and starting various lines of inquiry, we should be able to discover whether there is a concurrent testimony to the one theory or the other, and to determine in which direction generally the truth lies. And since every positive fact that is available has its significance in such an investigation, I begin with the most patent fact of all—the *existence* of these writings, which are placed in our hands as materials for the solution of the problem. Without asking in the meantime what the contents of the writings are, here is a hard fact—that writings do exist at the period from which we start. Let us see whether we can draw any conclusions from this mere fact; and for this purpose let us look at them, *first*, as mere literary products, and *secondly*, as religious compositions.

I. I propose, therefore, first of all to look at the compositions now before us in their literary character. As so many compositions belonging, according to the hypothesis, all to one age, they are well worthy of close scrutiny. Their very existence ought to tell us something, and, if possible, we ought to get some account of their production. Amos informs us he was one of the herdmen of Tekoa. This was a town or village some twelve miles south of Jerusalem, and bordering on the desert pasture-land, so that he is a native of the southern kingdom. He was not a “prophet nor the son of a prophet”—*i.e.*, he did not belong to what we may call now the professional class of prophets,

but was in fact a common man, not necessarily poor, but presumably not in high social position. He suddenly appears at Bethel, one of the seats of the state worship of the northern kingdom; and having delivered a denunciation against the sins of the kingdom, he is taken to task by the priest of Bethel, and in all probability left the country, retired to his own land, and wrote down his prophecies. Hosea seems, from every available indication bearing on the subject, to have been a native of the northern kingdom, and he concerns himself with its affairs almost exclusively. The other literary works ascribed to this age probably belong likewise to both kingdoms. And by the way, when we have so many anonymous writers in the Old Testament, and when these are described to us in modern works by such symbols as J, E, Q, A, B, C, R, and so forth, which convey to us little idea of their personality, it is positively refreshing to get face to face with two writers in flesh and blood, who evidently can contain more than one idea each. Having got two such men, I shall keep as much as I can to their testimony (though I think it is most likely that other writers, whose names we know not, were as human, and capable of taking as broad and comprehensive a view of their times). Their styles and themes are so characteristic, that I have unconsciously formed a picture of the two men in my own mind. Amos is a live, keen, *snell* man, with flashing restless eyes and dark locks, quick in his movements, master of his emotions, though his nostrils throb and his temples swell when he gets excited.

He has the sharp, high-set voice and wiry body of the modern Bedawy, and when you look at him, you expect him to say something lively and pointed—and he does it. He brings the air of the country about him. In the wilds of Tekoa he has seen encounters with the wild beasts, and has gazed at the stars in the unclouded blue of the midnight sky. So he is bold and cool and collected at the luxurious court, and comes like a gust of sharp, bracing wind through its stifling, sensuous atmosphere. Hosea is a bigger man, slower and more dignified in his movements. He is an inhabitant of a town, and lived surely near a public bakery, for he delights to draw illustrations from the fiery oven. His voice is softer and deeper; when you look on him a seriousness comes over you, for sorrow is marked on his face. If the modern interpretation of the opening chapters is right, he has been sorely tried with a bad wife, whom he tenderly loved; and through the laceration of the cords of his own heart, he has come to understand the unfailing love of God.

Clearly, then, we are in a time when literary composition was well developed all over the country. We have not only the graphic pictures of patriarchal life, so artless in their simplicity, and yet so artistic, that they are the delight of persons of all ages in all countries. We have the stories of the rough, rugged deeds of the Judges, marked with fine delineations of character and touches of pathos and humour; we have the story of Elijah in a form that nothing could improve, the life of Samuel, the character of Saul, Jonathan, and David, depicted in a manner

that a modern novelist could not surpass. Of an entirely different literary cast is the Book of the Covenant, with its brief, sententious expression of codified law. And in still another style we have these two books from the hands of Amos and Hosea, each preserving its own literary features, and indicating a very different personality in the writer, but both well finished as literary productions,—the herdsman of Tekoa delivering his rebukes like blows of a flail, and swelling out like peals of thunder in his rounded cycle of denunciation of the nations; the prophet of Israel, tender in heart as a woman, less careful of the form of his sentences, which are broken by the sobs of a breaking heart, but using his language to express some of the finest shades of thought and feeling. Though the productions are not many, they are thus sufficiently varied, and give plain proof that the power of composition on varied themes was an achieved fact in this age. *First* of all, the language by this time has received a well-developed, finished form; and *secondly*, it is not only spoken, but has become a literary medium for any class of composition.

Now language is a coin current of thought. It has a certain value and significance, not only to the speaker or writer, but to the hearer or reader.¹ By the aid of language, when once it has reached its growth, one may convey new thoughts to others; but in doing so he must make himself intelligible to them, and start on a basis which is common to him and them. Language spoken or written implies a

¹ See Robertson Smith, O.T., in the Jewish Church, Lect. 1. p. 22.

certain stage of intelligence in the people generally; and written language implies that there are people, more or less numerous, who can read. A popular literature—*i.e.*, literary products suited and interesting to the common people—implies readers among the common people. If these are fair inferences from the mere existence of a finished language and an achieved literature, their application to the matter in hand will enlarge our ideas of the period of history at which we take our start, and may enable us to go back to a period antecedent to it. From the language of such men as Amos and Hosea we may reach the mental condition of the generation in which they lived. And seeing that the literature before us is national and popular, if anything at all, we shall be able in some measure to gauge the standing of the nation as a whole,—to feel, so to speak, its intellectual pulse. These stories of the patriarchs, judges, and prophets were not written by some obscure individual and hidden away in his chambers; they are the very stuff that the people would delight in, and the very writing of them implies that there were readers ready for them. Nay, the prophetic writings themselves, granted that they were not read first of all to the people, but written after they were delivered, from the very fact that they are accounts of speeches thrown into the form of addresses, show that they are meant to be read by the people of the times. We conclude, therefore, that there was a circle, narrower or wider—probably pretty wide—fit to understand these writings, and attaching to the words

and phrases the meaning which, by simple construction, they convey. In a word, we get beyond mere "writings" to a people capable of reading and understanding them.

Now, since modern historiographers insist upon our starting at this period, we might reasonably expect them to give us some account of this remarkable fact, that we have suddenly such an amount of varied literature, with practically nothing of the kind—as it is maintained—in the age preceding it. There are certain songs which in their origin are admitted to be earlier, but they may, it is said, have been preserved orally; and in general the modern writers go upon the assumption that this eighth century is the earliest period at which we have written documents. Be it so; it was surely worth their while to give us some idea of how the event came about; why at this age there should be so much of sudden growth, or what in the immediate past had prepared for it. With their fondness for tracing development, here was something very attractive and deeply interesting; and one might have thought that critical writers, who, according to Robertson Smith,¹ are such masters in literary anatomy that their readers "can follow from chapter to chapter the process by which the Pentateuch grew to its present form," would have turned their attention to the history of the rise of literary composition in Israel. Yet on the subject they have very little to say. After asserting² that "with reference to any period earlier than the century 850-750 B.C., we can

¹ Pref. to *Hist. of Israel*, p. ix.

² *Hist. of Israel*, p. 464.

hardly be said to possess any statistics," and that "a contemporary literature is indispensable for the description of standing conditions," Wellhausen goes on:—

"But it was within this period that Hebrew literature first flourished—after the Syrians had been finally repulsed, it would seem. Writing of course had been practised from a much earlier period, but only in formal instruments, mainly upon stone. At an early period also the historical sense of the people developed itself in connection with their religion; but it found its expression in songs, which in the first instance were handed down by word of mouth only. Literature began with the collection and writing out of those songs; the 'Book of the Wars of the Lord' and the 'Book of Jashar' were the oldest historical books. The transition was next made to the writing of prose history with the aid of legal documents and family reminiscences; a large portion of this early historiography has been preserved to us in the books of Judges, Samuel, and Kings. Contemporaneously also certain collections of laws and decisions of the priests, of which we have an example in Exod. xxi., xxii., were committed to writing. Somewhat later, perhaps, the legends about the patriarchs and primitive times, the origin of which cannot be assigned to a very early date,¹ received literary shape. Specially remarkable is the rise of a written prophecy. The question why it was that Elijah and Elisha committed nothing to writing, while Amos a hundred years later is an author, hardly admits of any other answer than that in the interval a non-literary had developed into a literary age. How rapid the process was may be gathered from a comparison between the singularly broken utterances of the earlier oracle contained in Isa. xv., xvi., with the orations of Isaiah himself."

On the showing of Wellhausen himself, then, the literature is sufficiently varied and sufficiently extensive to demand attention merely as a collection of literary products. And whatever may be the ad-

¹ A footnote here is referred to below in chapter v. p. 122.

vance from the "earlier oracle" to the "orations of Isaiah," the style of Amos and Hosea is already as good as the Hebrew ever attained. Isaiah stands alone in this respect—and every country has its outstanding writers—but the sentences of the herdsman of Tekoa, and the rhythm of his language, and even the sustained rhetorical efforts of chapters in succession, are as finished as those of the best Hebrew writers. "To the unprejudiced judgment," says Robertson Smith,¹ "the prophecy of Amos appears one of the best examples of pure Hebrew style. The language, the images, the grouping are alike admirable; and the simplicity of the diction . . . is a token not of rusticity, but of perfect mastery over a language which, though unfit for the expression of abstract ideas, is unsurpassed as a vehicle for impassioned speech." As to the 'Book of the Wars of the Lord' and the 'Book of Jashar,' which Wellhausen sets down as the oldest historical books, we have so little from them that it would not be safe to draw deductions from their style. But if we examine songs such as that of Deborah, which Stade admits to bear the marks of the historical events which it celebrates—even if it were handed down orally to this so-called literary age—we find it distinguished by no inconsiderable literary powers. And then the "early historiography" preserved in the books of Judges, Samuel, and Kings, has nothing to lead us to suppose that it was the first effort at such composition; while the stories of the patriarchs are in the best style of the characteristic Hebrew prose.

¹ *Prophets of Israel*, p. 125 f.

The Laws, again, of the Book of the Covenant, are expressed in as clear and finished language as those of the Codes which are placed much farther down in history. It remains then, on the hypothesis before us, that literature sprang into existence fully developed, for the products before us give no signs of being earliest efforts, and, what is most vital, they are not of one class of composition, as might have been expected at the commencement of a literary age, but are most varied.¹ From all that appears on the face of them, we might most naturally infer that literary composition, in every variety of form, had been long prevalent among the Hebrews by the time these works were written. And surely it is a very poor account to get from those who profess to be able to follow the history step by step, that in a century "a non-literary had developed into a literary age."

Robertson Smith has some excellent remarks,¹ tending to show, from the case of the Arabs of the desert, that it was nothing extraordinary for men of humble station like Amos, with little or no book-learning, to be masters of the highest oratory:—

"Among the Hebrews as in the Arabian desert, knowledge and oratory are not affairs of professional education, or dependent for their cultivation on wealth and social status. . . . In Hebrew as in Arabic, the best writing is an unaffected transcript of the best speaking; the literary merit of the book of Genesis or the history of Elijah, like that of the 'Kitâb el Aghâny' or of the Norse Sagas, is that they read as if they

¹ The "elegy" as a particular kind of composition was known to Amos; for the word rendered "lamentation" in chap. v. 1 has this technical sense.

² Prophets, p. 126 f.

were told by word of mouth; and in like manner, the prophecies of Amos, though evidently rearranged for publication, and probably shortened from their original spoken form, are excellent writing, because the prophet writes as he spoke, preserving all the effects of pointed and dramatic delivery, with that breath of lyrical fervour which lends a special charm to the highest Hebrew poetry."

All this is very good, but it does not bring us a step nearer to the solution of the question, How did the literary custom arise? and it takes no note of the fact that by a "literary age" must be in any case meant an age of readers as well as writers. The only thing Wellhausen notes in connection with the transition of a non-literary to a literary age, is the final repulse of the Syrians, whatever that may have had to do with it. What we want to know is, What gave the impulse to this literary activity, and what prepared the people—or a circle of them—for being able to follow it? Judged by mere literary standards, these compositions would lead us to the conclusion that the literary art had been long practised; or, to put it otherwise, there is nothing on the face of these materials as literary products to hinder us from accepting writings as belonging to an earlier period, if they can be otherwise authenticated; there is nothing, based on a consideration of the culture of the age, to force us to the position that *this* is the beginning of a literary age.

I take it, then, that no sufficient account has been given of the remarkable phenomenon before us. Even if Wellhausen's admission is taken into account, that writing was practised from an early age, but only in formal instruments, and mostly on stone,

there is an immense step from that to this sudden production in one century of so varied a literature; and the other fact is to be explained that there must have been reading circles of larger or smaller size. Even rude writing on stone is an art that implied teaching of it, and the thing written was meant to be read.¹ Writing implies reading; both imply an education, and a sustained education of some kind. A literary age is, from the nature of the case, to a certain extent an educated age; and as a literature, even of the extent allowed by the modern historians, exhibiting such variety as these compositions present, demands some antecedent preparation, much more must we postulate for the age for which the compositions were written, a period of antecedent education. In a word, we are clearly not at the beginning of literary or educational activity in Israel.

II. We now go a step farther, and by similar reasoning we can show that as *religious* products the compositions before us imply a considerable degree of religious intelligence and education. A man does not speak or write unless he knows that his hearer or reader can follow him. And religious talk or composition presupposes religious intelligence corresponding to it. Granted that a new writer makes an advance in thought and puts forward new ideas, if he is to be understood at all he must start from

¹ Andrew Lang, while contending that Homer wrote his poems, adds, "But he did not write to be read" ('Good Words,' Aug. 1891). Still, Homer was not the only one in his day that could write; and, as Prof. Jebb remarks, long before the date of the earliest extant writing on marbles, the Greeks may have attained to ease in writing on softer materials. (Intro. to Homer, p. 110.)

the level of his reader's intelligence; and it is useless for him to publish unless he counts upon a circle of readers who can understand him.

Accustomed as we are to the spiritual language of Holy Scripture, we can only with difficulty comprehend the time and training implied in the development of a religious vocabulary. Language at best lags far behind thought; and when we consider that thought itself has to be drawn out, purified, refined by reflection, exalted by the elimination of lower material conceptions, we shall perceive that the attainment of a vocabulary expressing ideas such as the herdman of Tekoa and Hosea of Israel dwell among, implies both in the speaker and in the hearer a preparation of no little time and no little labour. An illustration from the history of modern missions will help to make this clearer. When Protestant missionaries first went to Syria, about the year 1826, after surveying the field before them, they wisely resolved to make use of the printing-press as soon as they should find opportunity. Though many of the people could not read, they were not altogether unlettered; the people with whom it was hoped easiest contact would be made were members of the Greek Orthodox Church, devout enough in their way, and under the regular care of their own religious teachers; and it was hoped that by the establishment of schools the power and the desire to read would be extended. And so, in addition to the Scriptures, it was designed to prepare certain works of a religious and educational character, to be ready for the demand when it should arise. Two of the

earliest works prepared and printed were translations of 'Robinson Crusoe' and the 'Pilgrim's Progress'—the former designed to be an interesting reading-book, the latter to be useful as a religious educator. The fates of the two works were remarkable. While 'Robinson Crusoe' had an immense popularity, the 'Pilgrim's Progress' lay in stock for many years. The former was accepted and read as a religious book, not more because it was printed and circulated by missionaries, than because of the *quasi*-pious reflections—admirably done by the translator into popular language—in which the unfortunate Robinson so freely indulges; but of the 'Pilgrim's Progress' the common people could make nothing. The reason is obvious: they had not the religious experience sufficient to enable them to understand a book which even our children delight in; and it was almost half a century before a race grew up, educated in missionary schools and taught in the Scripture, that could appreciate the book; and now it is as great a favourite with old and young as with ourselves. This was a case, be it observed, where the people had for centuries possessed a definite religion and a printed literature. What must the case have been where, by the hypothesis, the people had the merest rudiments of religious conception, and no literature?

Let us look at the facts of the case before us. We have Amos, not writing a book to be read by later times, but speaking his word in the northern kingdom, and committing it to writing in the southern; and we have Hosea probably both speaking and

writing. It may be that, as Robertson Smith has told us, the language used by Amos is not fitted for conveying abstract ideas. At all events, it is an impassioned, fervent language, whose elements are words purified from all low taint of superstition or animism, and, as we shall see, embodying thoughts of world-wide applicability. "Though the earliest of the canonical prophets, his view of the world is perhaps broader than that of any of them, just as his definitions of religion surpass in incisiveness and clearness those of the majority of his successors."¹ Hosea's style, though less finished from a literary point of view, is deeper in pathos and richer in spirituality. It is his preoccupation with the thought that apparently mars the symmetry of his diction. Both prophets give evidence of deep reflection on religious questions, resulting in views of life and duty, and conceptions of what God is, which may be placed in the first rank among the achievements of Old Testament writers, and afford evidence that thinking of this kind, and views of this character, were comprehensible by the people to whom they spoke. In other words, they imply an antecedent religious education. Indeed, the very oldest written works to which Hebrew writers refer, show by their titles that the earliest literature was based on religion. 'The Book of the Wars of Jehovah' implies in its name that even the rough struggles of Israel were regarded as God-guided; and 'The Book of Jashar,' or the Upright, testifies to the faith in Jehovah's righteousness in Israel (Judges v. 11).²

¹ A. B. Davidson in *Expositor*, third series, vol. v. p. 166.

² *Ibid.*, p. 46.

We shall find the advocates of the modern theory telling us that Amos was the first to teach this, and Hosea the first to say the other thing. Whatever they said, and whatever they were the first to say, the people of their day knew the meaning of the words and expressions addressed to them. If these prophets were the first to speak in this manner, then, of course, their hearers were the first to hear these things; and yet the people seem to understand quite well all that is said to them. There is a religious phraseology in existence, a religious consciousness equal to comprehend it. These books are religious from beginning to end. The persons who heard or read them must have had such an antecedent training or knowledge as would enable them to follow them, and we cannot by any possibility admit that the whole religious consciousness of the nation took a sudden start to such a level. Let any one try for a moment to imagine Amos addressing the people of Israel in the name of Jahaveh: "Seek ye me, and ye shall live" (Amos v. 4, 6): "Seek good, and not evil, that ye may live; and Jahaveh, the God of hosts, shall be with you, in such a manner as ye say. Hate the evil, and love the good, and establish judgment in the gate" (v. 14, 15): "Let judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream" (v. 24): "I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of Jahaveh" (viii. 11):—and ask whether the people who heard the words had not already been accustomed to form some ideas of judgment and righteousness, and

evil and good, some conceptions of the holiness of their national God far above the level of persons at the animistic or even the narrow national stage of religion. Of the teaching of Amos as to the nature and character of the God in whose name he spoke, we shall have to treat at length in the sequel. I wish at present to emphasise this one point, that even this cycle of moral conceptions implies an antecedent education of a special kind and of long continuance. When we turn to Hosea, we find even a richer vocabulary and still deeper conceptions. "Sow to yourselves," he says, "in righteousness, and reap according to mercy; break up your fallow ground: for it is time to seek Jahaveh, till He come and rain righteousness upon you. Ye have plowed wickedness, ye have reaped iniquity; ye have eaten the fruit of lies" (Hos. x. 12, 13): "Therefore turn thou to thy God: keep mercy and judgment, and wait on thy God continually" (xii. 6). We shall afterwards see what Hosea's ideas of God were: meantime, I call attention to such expressions as these,—to his constant dwelling on "mercy," "truth," "judgment," "fear of Jahaveh,"¹ and such declarations as these: "In Thee the fatherless findeth mercy" (xiv. 3); "The ways of Jahaveh are right, and the just shall walk in them: but transgressors shall fall therein" (xiv. 9); "I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love" (xi. 4).—all which imply something very different from the first beginnings of reflection on religious things. This point requires to be insisted upon, because, in discussions on

¹ See, for example, i. 6; ii. 19, 20, 23; iii. 5; iv. 1; vi. 6.

the development of religious thought, the "original" or "primary" significations of expressions are often relied upon as evidence. What is clearly established by the most cursory glance at the books of Amos and Hosea, or indeed any of the books belonging to what is called the first writing age, is, that we are already far beyond a tentative or infantile use of language to express religious conceptions.

Thus, then, from these two sides, the merely literary and the religious aspects of the books before us, we conclude that the eighth century rests upon an anterior stage of preparation, which must have been considerable in both respects. There was need to dwell on this aspect of the subject, lest, by taking as our starting-point this comparatively late period, it might have been assumed that we were starting from a low stage of culture in order to trace growth upwards.¹ The whole point of the present argument is, that we are already at a high stage both of literary culture and of religious consciousness.

Our argument hitherto has been of an inferential and indirect kind, to the effect that the condition we have found prevailing at the time of the first admitted literary compositions implies an antecedent period of literary activity and religious education. There is implied in this inference that the teaching of the earliest writing prophets in substance also

¹ In view of these utterances of the earliest writing prophets, and what they imply, it is simply incomprehensible to me how any one can write of the Decalogue as a recent writer in this country does: "The Decalogue, as we have it, does not reflect the standard of conduct which prevailed in his [Moses'] day, or for a long time after him: it reflects, indeed, a standard of conduct which only became fully present to the Jewish mind many centuries later, under the influence of the prophets." —National Religion, by Allan Menzies, p. 22.

rests upon antecedent teaching; and as this position is strenuously controverted by those who make these prophets innovators, not reformers or continuators, it is important to look at evidence, of a direct or positive kind, on the question. There is nothing in the writings of the earliest writing prophets to indicate that they came forward as exponents of a new religious idea, or that they regarded themselves as originators in any proper sense of the word. On the contrary, they represent to the people, and lead us to believe, that they are proclaiming the true and authoritative religion in opposition to the errors and abuses of their times. Nay; they do not leave the matter in this indefinite form: they refer to men before them, prophets like themselves, who had done exactly the same thing. Let us listen to Amos: "I raised up of your sons [he is addressing Israel, the northern kingdom] for prophets, and of your young men for Nazirites. Is it not even thus, O ye children of Israel? saith Jahaveh. But ye gave the Nazirites wine to drink: and commanded the prophets, saying, Prophesy not" (Amos ii. 11, 12). "Surely Jahaveh God will do nothing, but He revealeth His secret unto His servants the prophets. . . . Jahaveh hath spoken, who can but prophesy?" (iii. 7, 8). And to the same purpose Hosea: "Therefore have I hewed them by the prophets; I have slain them by the words of my mouth: and thy judgments¹ are as the light which goeth forth" (Hos. vi. 5): "I have also spoken unto the prophets, and I have multiplied visions, and by the hand of the prophets have I used

¹ Or "my judgments," according to some ancient versions.

similitudes" (xii. 10): "And by a prophet Jahaveh brought Israel up out of Egypt, and by a prophet was he preserved" (xii. 13).

All these references are plain and pertinent enough on the Biblical account of the preceding history, which gives us from Samuel onwards,¹ a succession of prophetic men who are represented as standing forth reproving, rebuking, and asserting the true religion of Jahaveh. But they are meaningless on the modern theory, which represents Elijah as a half-legendary character, and his successor Elisha as one who compassed political ends by means of very questionable morality;² and as for Samuel, when the earlier and true account of him is eliminated from the later and false, he comes out of the critical crucible an old man endowed with second-sight, who for a silver sixpence could tell people what had become of strayed asses and suchlike matters.³ Clearly these two prophets are confident that they are continuators of the teaching of men like themselves; and all the proof that Amos gives of the fact is the appeal to the knowledge of his hearers. "Is it not so, O house of Israel?" We have the testimony, in a word, of the generation in which they lived; and when modern critics come forward and tell us that Amos and Hosea were the first to teach as they did—simply because they will not allow us to appeal to any documents as of earlier date—I am quite prepared to put the issue in this form, that Amos and Hosea knew better where they had got their religious

¹ "All the prophets from Samuel," says St. Peter in Acts iii. 24.

² Wellhausen, *Hist. of Israel*, p. 293.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 253.

education than half-a-dozen modern professors can tell us. Either there was a succession of prophetic men before Amos and Hosea whose teaching was of the same spirit with theirs—in which case the view of the antecedent history given by the Biblical historians is strongly confirmed, and the “prophetic period” has its boundaries much farther back than the modern theory allows; or else there was no such succession—in which case our witnesses are set down as not knowing the source of their own religious instruction in the first place, and in the second place the work of these earliest writing prophets is left as a thing hanging in the air, to use Wellhausen’s own simile,¹ like a man trying to hold himself up by his waist-band. I quote once more the cautious and well-weighed words of Dr. Davidson:—

“Several well-known modern writers on prophecy . . . have concluded that such a prophet as Amos stood virtually alone in the nation; that there was a great gulf fixed, on one side of which stood the prophet, and on the other the people in a mass; and that what the prophet did was nothing less than to enunciate and introduce a new religion, which had almost nothing in common with that hitherto professed by the people beyond the name Jehovah employed by both. This theory is not only opposed to all the representations of the prophets themselves and the universal tradition among the writers of Israel, but it entirely fails to account for the prophet. The old view, according to which each prophet was a simple, isolated miracle, out of all connection with the life and thought of his time, really offered an explanation, if the view could be accepted; and if the choice lay between the two theories, we should be driven to accept the old theory as necessary to the satisfaction of our understanding. The fact, however, that the prophet Amos himself arose out of

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 39.

the lowest ranks of the people, is sufficient evidence that there existed no such gulf between the prophets and the universal mass of the nation as the modern writers referred to represent.”¹

¹ *Expositor*, third series, vol. v. p. 165 f.

CHAPTER IV.

THE "EARLIER PROPHETS."

Since the admitted writings of the ninth and eighth centuries imply an antecedent literary and religious activity, and since the earliest writing prophets appeal to others before them, an attempt is made to find, if possible, traces of such activity and such men—Indications of writing in early times—The tablets of Tell-el-Amarna—Inference as to the possibility of written composition long before the ninth century—Oral transmission does not exclude writing—Power to write implies instruction and exercise—As to religious education, the so-called "schools of the prophets" are considered—Attempt of critical writers to dissociate Samuel and Amos from these societies—Wellhausen's admission of early religious colouring of the history—Argument therefrom—The accuracy of the oldest writings in matters of topography, and what it implies—Conclusion that the earliest history writers are not at the stage of floating traditionary myth—Literary activity of priestly class.

WE have thus seen that as literary products and as religious products the writings of the ninth and eighth centuries imply a long course of education, reflection, and culture. We have also heard the earliest of the writing prophets appealing to an antecedent series of public men, who are said to have anticipated them in the work of instruction

and admonition. Of all this antecedent activity the modern historians give practically no account. Let us inquire whether from the Biblical writers we can gain any information. As the time of which we are speaking is confessedly an age of readers as well as writers, it is interesting to inquire whether we have any proofs of the existence of literary activity at an earlier period. We cannot, of course, from the restriction we have imposed on ourselves, build upon such statements as occur in the Pentateuch to the effect that Moses wrote this and that. But we may ask whether we have any reliable information at all as to the provisions that existed in Israel for perpetuating these arts of reading and writing.

And here we come upon a most remarkable and significant fact,—that the Old Testament books from beginning to end give us no intimations of the nature of such provisions. They imply that writing and reading were generally known, but they tell us nothing about the communication of instruction in these things. We find, indeed, in the Pentateuch,¹ the injunction in general terms to teach the precepts of the Law to the children (Exod. xii. 26, 27; Deut. iv. 9, vi. 6-20), and the people are enjoined in cases of difficulty to inquire at the priest or judge. But, on the one hand, if the books in which these injunctions occur are of late date, we

¹ Delitzsch has pointed out that there is no mention of writing in the striking account of Abraham's dealing with the Hittites in Gen. xxiii.; nor does the usual word for writing (*katab*) occur in any part of that book: whereas from Exodus onwards an acquaintance with and varied use of writing are implied. It would thus appear as if the Pentateuch placed the introduction of writing after the patriarchal age and before the time of the Exodus.—Intro. to Comm. on Genesis, Eng. transl. p. 3 ff.

cannot from them infer anything to our purpose; on the other hand, even if the injunctions rest upon a sound early tradition, they are so general that we are still left in ignorance. The matter of education is not apparently committed to any but the parents, and the question would only be thrown back a stage as to their fitness to teach; and from none of the books of the Old Testament can we gather what appliances, if any, existed for the instruction of youth. Even in regard to the priests, who, on any theory as to the development of the history, must have had to undergo special instruction in the matters of ceremonial intrusted to them, we are not told anything as to the means provided for imparting it. Were the age before us really the first literary age, we should expect some of the writers of the period to give us some hint of the new activity and the impulse that led to it. But we have no such indication. In short, were we to reason from the silence of the books, we might conclude that there was no provision for education at all in even the narrower circles of a learned class, if such existed. But we could not possibly find a better example of the inadequacy of the argument from silence; for, to say nothing else, it would leave the so-called first literary age destitute of any foundation, a sudden phenomenon without any preparation; and if anything in the world implies preparation and development it is literary activity.

But for the consideration just mentioned, we might have concluded that these references to reading and writing are, in critical phraseology, a pro-

jection of later ideas into earlier times. There is, however, another conclusion which may be drawn from this silence as to educational activity. The Old Testament writers, when they speak of reading and writing, speak of them as matters of course, as if they were commonly practised, well-understood things. It is, indeed, the custom in some quarters to doubt the possibility of literary activity on the part of Moses;¹ and, as we have seen, Wellhausen only grudgingly admits that writing was practised before the eighth century. It may turn out, however, that the silence of the Old Testament writers may have the very explanation I have just suggested—viz., that from a very early time reading and writing were quite common. For, to speak first of all of Egypt, not only are there proofs of the practice of writing long before the time of Moses, but the period immediately preceding the exodus was one of remarkable activity and high attainment. The poem of Pentaur,² which has been compared with a lay of the Iliad, celebrates a victory gained over the Hittites by Rameses II., the father of the Pharaoh of the exodus. And beyond Egypt, it now appears, literary activity prevailed to an extraordinary degree; “and the bricks are alive at this day to testify it.” Quite recently, indeed, a new light has been thrown on this whole subject by the discovery at Tell-el-Amarna, in Upper Egypt, of certain tablets, written in the cuneiform character, and going back to the

¹ Thus Allan Menzies: “Even if he were to some extent a man of letters (and it is doubtful if he could be so), any written words of his which survive must be extremely short.”—*National Religion*, p. 15 f.

² See Note IX.

century before the date assigned by most Egyptologists to the exodus. These prove, according to Sayce,¹ that "good schools existed (at that time) throughout Western Asia; that the people of Canaan could read and write before the Israelitish conquest; that there was an active literary intercourse from one end of the civilised East to the other." It is true, the medium of communication was the Babylonian language and script; but we cannot suppose that a people acquainted with that mode of writing would relapse into illiterates when the Phœnician alphabet took its place;² much more reasonable is it to suppose that this discovery would be an immense stimulus to them. We need no longer, therefore, wonder that among the towns taken by Joshua, was one called Kirjath-sepher, *Book-town* (Josh. xv. 15; Judges i. 11), or Kirjath-sannah (Josh. xv. 49); or that a lad caught at the roadside was able to write down the names of the chief men of Succoth in the time of the Judges (Judges viii. 14, Revised Version). Nay, we need not wonder, as otherwise we naturally do, that the Old Testament gives no account of provision for teaching, or any hint of schools for instruction of youth. In all probability—in view of this dis-

¹ 'Contemp. Review' for August 1888. In the 'Presbyterian Review' for the same month there is another early notice of the tablets. Fuller accounts have been subsequently published. See, *e.g.*, the 'Proceedings of the Society of Biblical Archaeology' from 1888, and the new series of 'Records of the Past.' The papers of M. Halévy in the 'Revue des Etudes Juives' for 1890 are particularly valuable. See also Conder in the 'Scottish Review' for April 1891.

² The Egyptian writing already had alphabetical signs; and it is generally supposed that a Semitic people living in Egypt (it may have been the Hyksos) carried out the hint thus given and developed a proper alphabet. See Isaac Taylor's 'The Alphabet,' vol. I. chap. ii.; Stade's Hebrew Grammar, § 18.

covery—education was a much more general thing than we are usually led to suppose.

If the people of Canaan thus at an early period had attained a literary activity of this degree, scholars of Wellhausen's school, who derive so much of Israel's culture from the Canaanites, can hardly refuse to allow a considerable attainment in literary power to the Israelites at a much earlier period than the eighth century. At least they cannot say that, owing to want of culture, Israel could not have developed some literature long before that time. Given the ability to write, the art must have been kept alive by exercise, and handed on by education of some kind. The existence of finished composition at the time at which we start, and the general ability to read which is thereby implied, can only be explained by a considerable period of preparation and exercise. The question would then remain whether there is any time, or whether there are any periods, otherwise suitable for stimulating and maintaining such an activity, and whether we can detect traces of its actual existence before the century to which we are confining ourselves.

To begin with old songs, there is now no longer the necessity to suppose that they were handed down orally for want of the power to write. The song of Deborah, for instance, which admittedly bears the stamp of the age to which it relates, may have come down in writing even from that period. The Montenegrins are in the habit of writing contemporary history in the form of ballads;¹ and the women of

¹ Ranke, *Hist. of Servia*, Bohn's transl., p. 411 ff. Cf. p. 49 ff.

the modern Bedawin stir up the valour of their husbands by improvised songs.¹ The custom is therefore ancient; and if the power to write is also ancient, it is not necessary to suppose that such songs were entirely left to oral transmission. Again, the "legal documents and family reminiscences" out of which Wellhausen allows that early history was written, could have been of very ancient date, and of much more voluminous compass than he supposes; for the writing on stone which he thinks was the practice at the earliest times, turns out to have been a writing on clay tablets; and judging from the contents of the tablets of Tell-el-Amarna, they may have been the depositories of very minute and multifarious details. Sayce, indeed, has long supposed that excavations at Kirjath-sepher or Tyre may reveal buried libraries of this material such as have been unearthed at Nineveh.

Even if we find compositions dating ostensibly from a time at which writing is not known to have been practised, it is not absolutely necessary to regard them as compositions of a later age; for oral tradition, for certain kinds of literature, is stronger than we might at first sight suppose. Max Müller, writing on this subject,² after stating that written literature is a very late invention in most countries, and that in India we have no trace of books before the fifth century B.C., says: "It is true that oral tradition, before the invention of writing and printing, had proved itself a very safe guardian of poetry,

¹ See Mrs. Finn's interesting paper in *Quarterly Statement of the Palestine Exploration Fund*, 1879, p. 42.

² 'Good Words' for August 1887.

and few would doubt that the earliest poetry which we know in India and Greece goes back at least to 1000 B.C. But it may go back, for all we know, to 2000 or 3000 B.C." Other things than poetry, however, can be so preserved. Jerome¹ mentions that Jewish children were taught to say by heart the Genealogies; and I myself came across a shopkeeper in the East who could repeat, without the book, the first chapter of St. Matthew, but could with difficulty read a few verses from the first chapter of St. John. It is to be observed that, as in this case, the cultivation of memory does not cease with, nor is superseded by, the introduction of writing and printing. Children in modern Eastern schools perform feats of memory that are almost incredible; but the passages repeated are committed to memory from the printed page. In view of such facts, it should not excite so much surprise or suspicion that we have compositions in the Old Testament professing to come from a very early time.

Turning now from these indications of the ability to write, if we search for historical occasions which may have stimulated it into exercise, we naturally look for the rise of a national literature at a time of some active stirring of the national life. Times when nations have achieved something are times when they wish to record what they have done; times when they brace themselves up for a great effort are those times in which feeling and purpose seek to stamp themselves in permanent form in writing. Such

¹ On Titus iii. 9—Calmet's *Diet.*, article "Genealogies." Cf. *Prol. to Ecclus.*, and *Ecclus.* xxxviii. 24, 26; xxxix. 1-11.

times there were long before the period of the Syrian wars. The period of Moses is such a time, at which, if there is any truth at all in the traditions regarding it, the art of writing, if known, as it is admitted to have been, would have found exercise in formal composition.¹ The statements here and there in the Pentateuch, that Moses wrote this and that, are not mere guesses or embellishments by a later writer, for such a one would have more probably ascribed to him the whole Pentateuch. Moreover, the references to the 'Book of the Wars of the Lord' and the 'Book of Jashar' scarcely look like indications that the works in question were almost contemporaneous; they rather suggest the inference that literary treasures were already existent and recognised; and the slight notices of writing at succeeding times give the impression that writing was not an innovation, but a matter of course. Nor are there wanting other suitable times anterior to the eighth century. Such are the times of Samuel and David, when the national spirit was deeply stirred and national expectations at the strongest tension. Such also is the time of Solomon, when the building of the Temple and palace at Jerusalem quickened a new industrial life, and when luxury demanded an increase of agriculture, and was fed by the commerce in which the royal fleet was engaged—not to speak of the activity and enterprise of the dynasty of Omri in the northern kingdom. Any or all of these periods, anterior to the eighth century, were just such as would have quickened into exercise a power which was certainly

¹ Rawlinson—Moses, *His Life and Times*, pp. 30, 31.

possessed by Israel, and would have been favourable to the production of a literature of a national kind. The point is, that the Hebrews *did* know the art of writing, and therefore needed only some such stimulus to develop it into that of literary composition. What is insisted on is that writing, including reading, implies some sort of education. Whether the people as a whole had this benefit or not, there must have been provision for imparting instruction in the circles where reading and writing were possessed; and as we have seen, Sayce argues, from the existence of the clay tablets referred to, that schools must have existed all over the country before the exodus.

A similar conclusion must be drawn in regard to religious instruction. When we find an age like that of Amos and Hosea in which religious discourse was common and well understood, and a religious vocabulary well developed, we must conclude that by some means, formal or informal, this power to converse on religious subjects had been produced and fostered. Religion and religious conversation were clearly not things confined to learned or professional circles, but were matters of popular interest. Can we find traces of anything that could have fostered this as a popular activity? The so-called "schools of the prophets" have been the subject of much fanciful speculation, and modern critical writers make very merry over those who see in them anything like an educational institution. But in spite of the exaggerated importance that has been assigned to them, and in spite of the ridicule of the critics, the subject is worth consideration, when we are in

search of some link that will connect a non-literary with a literary age.

Let us go back to the books of Samuel, which, whatever may be the date of their composition, are admitted to contain authentic information of the times to which they relate. The rude and unsettled age of the Judges is passing away. The lead in national affairs which had been taken by local heroes from time to time as occasion called them forth, is now in the hands of Samuel, whose position resembles that of Moses and Joshua. In his time we see springing up two national institutions, the monarchy and prophecy, through whose influences the civil and religious institutions of Israel are to acquire a more organised form. As to Samuel's own activity, "all Israel, from Dan to Beersheba, knew that he was established to be a prophet of the Lord" (1 Sam. iii. 20): "He judged Israel all the days of his life; and went from year to year in circuit to Beth-el, to Gilgal and Mizpeh, and judged Israel in all those places. And his return was to Ramah; for there was his house" (1 Sam. vii. 15-17). What, however, is of special interest for us at present is the mention for the first time of certain societies or bands of prophets in Samuel's days; and in spite of Stade's sneer that the so-called "schools of the prophets" have been in ancient and even in modern times a favourite hobby with those who delight in fanciful and *dilettante* study of the Old Testament,¹ I must dwell for a little on this remarkable feature of the religious history of Israel. I do not, in the mean-

¹ Geschichte, i. p. 478, note.

time, call them schools, nor do I think they were such in the ordinary sense of the word; but I think it will appear exceedingly probable that they exercised a powerful educational influence even from a literary point of view.

The first mention of these prophetic bands is on the occasion of Samuel taking leave of Saul after announcing to him that he was to be king. The Benjamite is told that when he comes to the hill [Gibeah] of God, he will meet a company of prophets "coming down from the high place with a psaltery, and a tabret, and a pipe, and a harp," &c. (1 Sam. x. 5, 6). Later on, when David fled from Saul to Samuel, he came and dwelt in Naioth; . . . and when Saul sent messengers to take him, they encountered the company of the prophets prophesying, and Samuel standing as their head, &c. (1 Sam. xix. 18-24). We shall have to speak of this movement in its religious aspect by-and-by. In the meantime we take it as certain that there was, in Samuel's days, some society of prophets, bound together by some religious tie, and occupied with some kind of religious functions. These notices bring us down to the eve of David's reign; and we hear no more of such associations in the times of Solomon, or of the kings who reigned immediately after the disruption; but an incidental notice (1 Kings xx. 35) relating to the time of Ahab, of "a certain man of the sons of the prophets," as if the order was well known, makes it probable that the associations, in some form or other, were never broken up. When we come to the time of Elisha we have quite a number of detailed notices,

which show us that by that time these societies were numerous and influential. When Elijah is taking leave of Elisha, the two pass from Gilgal to Beth-el, and from thence to Jericho; and at both places the sons of the prophets come out to meet them. Probably these places only are mentioned because they lay in the way, and there may have been similar societies elsewhere. At Gilgal itself Elisha is seen with the sons of the prophets sitting before him (2 Kings iv. 38); and a little farther on they complain to him that the place of their settlement is too strait for them, and propose to bring timber from the Jordan to make a more commodious dwelling (2 Kings vi. 1 ff). Elisha, however, does not confine himself to Gilgal, but is found dwelling also at Carmel (2 Kings ii. 25) and at Samaria (2 Kings vi. 32). The prophets seem to have been a numerous body in the country. In the time of Ahab it is said that when Jezebel cut off the prophets of Jahaveh, Obadiah took a hundred of them, and hid them by fifty in a cave (1 Kings xviii. 4). At the parting of Elijah from Elisha, fifty of the sons of the prophets of Jericho stood to view afar off as the two took their way to the Jordan (2 Kings ii. 1-7); and in Elisha's community at Gilgal one hundred are mentioned as present on one occasion (2 Kings iv. 38-44). Finally, we have incidental notices as to their organisation and mode of life. The head of the society is treated with the greatest respect, as we see in the cases of Samuel and Elisha, being called *father* or *master* (1 Sam. x. 12; 2 Kings ii. 3). He is attended by a *famulus*, or intimate ser-

vant. Elisha is described as the man who "poured water on the hands of Elijah" (2 Kings iii. 11); and Elisha is served in the same manner by Gehazi (2 Kings iv., v., viii.) Elisha's appointment as his master's successor is ordered to be solemnised by anointing (1 Kings xix. 16)—though there is no mention of its being done; and lastly, though they lived together in communities, wearing, as some suppose, coarse garments, and nourishing themselves on plain fare (2 Kings iv. 38 ff. ; 1 Kings xix. 6), they were not necessarily celibates; for we hear of a "certain woman of the wives of the sons of the prophets," who had fallen into poverty after her husband's death, and in whose behalf Elisha wrought a miracle to save her from seeing her two sons taken to be bondmen by her creditor (2 Kings iv. 1).

These notices, drawn mainly from those stories of the prophets incorporated in the books of Kings, which admittedly belong to this first period of literary composition, may be accepted as the statement of what every one believed at the time they were written; they are too numerous, too varied, and too detailed, to be treated as afterthoughts, or idealising of facts; and, in short, may be taken as historical, since there was no object to be served by inventing them. They amount to this: that these societies or associations, whatever was their precise constitution, were a recognised thing, well rooted in Israel a century or so before Amos wrote. Now when we turn to Amos himself, we find proof that they were equally well known and recognised in his days. "I am no prophet, nor son of a prophet" (Amos vii.

14, 15), he says, disclaiming connection with them for himself (in what sense we shall see by-and-by), but attesting their existence. It is not necessary at present to follow their history farther down. What has been said has been advanced to show that the appearance of the men usually called writing prophets was not a sudden thing without any preparation, and more particularly because possibly we may have here the link connecting the so-called non-literary with the alleged first literary age.

Those who would minimise the culture and attainments of the pre-prophetic age, as they call it, of course make very little of these associations of the prophets as elevating influences in the nation; in fact they ridicule them as disorderly and disreputable societies. This is how Wellhausen speaks of the prophetic bands in Samuel's time:¹ "Troops of ecstatic enthusiasts showed themselves here and there, and went about with musical accompaniments in processions which often took the form of wild dances; even men of the most sedate temperament were sometimes smitten with the contagion, and drawn into the charmed circle. In such a phenomenon, occurring in the East, there was nothing intrinsically strange; among the Canaanites, such 'Nebim'—for so they were styled—had long been familiar, and they continued to exist in the country after the old fashion, long after their original character, so far as Israel was concerned, had been wholly lost. The new thing at this juncture was that this spirit passed over upon Israel, and that the best

¹ *Hist. of Israel*, p. 449.

members of the community were seized by it. It afforded an outlet for the suppressed excitement of the nation."

The incongruity of setting Samuel at the head of such a noisy crew (though the best members of the community are admitted to have been infected) Wellhausen gets over by the assumption of two contradictory traditions. The story of Saul's appearance at Naioth in Ramah where David was, and of his being overpowered by the prophetic influence, is, we are told,¹ "a pious caricature; the point can be nothing but Samuel's and David's enjoyment of the disgrace of the naked king;" and Wellhausen, who is our caricaturist for the moment, goes on to say: "For the general history of the tradition the most interesting circumstance is that Samuel has here become the head of a school of prophets, and the leader of their exercises. In the original view of the matter (chaps. ix., x.) he appears alone and independent, and has nothing to do with the companies of the ecstasies, the *Nebiim*. He is a *Rōeh* or seer, not a *Nabi* or prophet. True, it is asserted in the gloss (ix. 9) that the two words mean the same thing—that what is now called *Nabi* was formerly called *Rōeh*. But that is scarcely quite correct. The author of ix., x. knows the name *Nabi* very well too, but he never applies it to Samuel; he only uses it in the plural, of the troops of Jehovah—intoxicated dervishes."

As to the later associations of prophets, he says:² "In the time of Ahab and Jehu, the *Nebiim* were a

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 268.

² *Hist. of Israel*, p. 293.

widespread body, and organised in orders of their own, but they were not highly respected; the average of them were miserable fellows, who ate out of the king's hand, and were treated with disdain by members of the leading classes. Amos of Tekoa, who, it is true, belonged to a younger generation, felt it an insult to be counted one of them. Elijah and Elisha rose certainly above the level of their order; but the first, whose hands remained pure, while he no doubt produced a great impression at the time by his fearless words, effected nothing against the king, and quite failed to draw the people over to his side; while Elisha, who did effect something, made use of means which could not bear the light, and which attest rather the weakness than the strength of prophecy in Israel."

Stade writes in the same vein, and is even more lively. The ancient seer, according to him, was one who had second-sight; but the prophets were distinguished from them in that "they appear in bands and swarms, sometimes crowding into fixed places, at other times wandering through the country, always infecting new individuals and drawing them into their ranks. Clairvoyance with them gives place to the noisy utterances of possession. God's hand moves them so mightily that they rave and roar, dance and spring, and pour out in torrents whatever He suggests to them. The accession of this passionate excitement is skilfully aided by noisy music. . . . In short, from the descriptions that we have of prophetic activity in ancient times, there can be no doubt that here is a manifestation of the

same 'sacred disease' which inspired the servants of Dionysos even to frenzy, which led the priests of the Syrian goddess to wound and maim themselves, which can be observed even at the present day in the dervishes of the Mohammedan East, and among them also produces such wonderful feats and such repulsive acts, and which lends to such fanatics as these the character of holiness, even when the possession impels them to immoral deeds."¹

All this is neither more nor less than a miserable travesty of the accounts which lie before us: it seems to me, further, to be a mistake from the point of view of those writers themselves. For the position taken up leaves little room for the development which they are so fond of tracing, and practically forces them to regard the writing prophets as sudden apparitions, without anything in the antecedent history out of which they could have been developed. Apart from this, however, I must particularly refer to the attitude of Samuel and Amos, at the two ends of the series, to these prophetic companies. The endeavour is made, as it has been seen, to dissociate both men from the prophetic companies, but I think without the slightest ground. Wellhausen's statements amount to this: Samuel stood alone and independent, apart from the *Nebiim*, although "the best members of the community were seized by" the spirit that prevailed; and further, a later tradition put him at the head of the school, although the men composing these schools were for the most part a

¹ Stade, *Geschichte*, vol. i. p. 476 ff. The reader should, however, here turn to 1 Kings xviii. 26 ff., and contrast the bearing of Elijah with that of the prophets of Baal.

miserable lot of fellows, and Amos disdained to be counted as belonging to them. Surely the later tradition did not mean to *degrade* Samuel by putting him at the head of the prophets; and yet, if they were generally viewed as is represented, it was no honour. The truth is, there is no reason, except the requirements of Wellhausen's theory, for doubting what is said of Samuel's connection with the prophets. And then as to Amos, I am sure that no one but a modern critic could interpret his words as they do. The priest of Beth-el, Amaziah, had said to him, "O thou seer,¹ go, flee thee away into the land of Judah, and there eat bread, and prophesy there," &c.; to which Amos replied, "I am no prophet, neither the son of a prophet; but I am an herdman, and a dresser of sycamore trees: and Jahaveh took me as I followed the flock, and Jahaveh said unto me, Go, prophesy unto my people Israel" (Amos vii. 12-15). How these words can be twisted into an expression of contempt for the prophets I cannot conceive. The contrast which Amos draws is between a professional prophet and a humble herdman following the flock: and the only fair inference to be drawn is, that he did not pretend to any trained skill in prophesying; that he did not derive his commission from any order of men; that the truth he delivered was not learned in any school. Jahaveh took him. He may mean this simply and

¹ Wellhausen strives hard to make out that the names Roeh (seer) and Nabl (prophet) had different significations in the time of Samuel, and that the distinction only gradually faded away. This he does in order to place the Roeh above the flagellant Nabl, as he terms him. It is worth noticing, however, that, in the passage of Amos referred to, the two terms seem to be convertible; and also that in Gen. xx. 7 (which belongs to E.—see Note VIII.) Abraham is called a Nabl.

nothing more; if he means to give any opinion of the prophets and the sons of the prophets, it is more likely to be favourable than the reverse, as if he had said, "I do not pretend to the skill or authority of a prophet; I am but a common peasant." But we need be in no doubt on the subject; for Amos elsewhere, in recounting God's great deeds for His people, mentions the giving of prophets (ii. 11). Who, we ask, were the prophets to whom he could here allude as a class of God-appointed men? We know of none that were not connected with the prophetic class with which our critics would have Amos disdain to be identified. The whole interpretation is forced; and though, *if the theory were proved*, the words of Amos in this passage *might* be construed to agree with it—making him, however, inconsistent with himself in another place—the words cannot by any means be taken as even a plausible support of it.

I take it, then, that there were societies or guilds of prophets from Samuel's time, and that the best men of the time were either connected with them, or regarded them as composed of men devoted to Jahaveh's service; and I think we may find in them something that will help to explain the literary and religious features of the century we are considering. We do not know much of the occupations of these sons of the prophets; and of their earlier societies, particularly, in the time of Samuel, we only obtain glimpses. But this we know: they had a religious basis; for though Wellhausen says they arose out of the oppression of the Philistines, he admits that "religion and pa-

triotism were then identical." We find also that music was practised among them (and even as late as the time of Elisha, that prophet is described as calling for a minstrel to play before he delivered his prophecy—2 Kings iii. 15). Now as to the former, we know that religion combined with patriotism characterised all the prophets, and their patriotism expressed itself in what we may call a theory or philosophy of the national history, the chief elements of which were a conviction that Jahaveh had specially guided the nation in the past, and a belief that He had in store for it a noble future. The germs of such a theory of the history were present in the "religion tinged with patriotism" of the very earliest prophetic movement. Now it will be evident there is room here for study, and in this germ we have the beginnings of the Biblical conception of history. The events of the past, the movements of the present, the prospects of the future, are of deep interest to men possessed with this central idea of their national life. If I mistake not, Wellhausen himself bears unwilling testimony to this fact.¹ Summing up his critical estimate of the historical books, he says that the specific character of Israelite history, which has chiefly led to its being called *sacred* history, rests for the most part on the repainting of the original picture. But he adds, "The discolouring influences begin early;" and by this he means "that uniform stamp impressed on the tradition by men who regarded history exclusively from the point of view of their own principles." In fact, there is "a religious

¹ Hist. of Israel, p. 293 f.

influence, which in the books of Samuel and Kings turns out to be the prophetic one." He will not allow, however, that it is to the prophets that the Hebrew people owe their history as a whole; and "least of all can the colleges of the B'ne Nebiim ["sons of the prophets"] at Gilgal and other places, be regarded as nurseries of historic tradition." But when he speaks of the "old books of the people," which the prophets remodelled for the edification of the new generation, we must not forget that, according to his own estimate of the literary history, these must have been produced just about the time that these colleges of the prophets flourished; and he neither tells us who could have been the writers of them, nor who were the "earlier prophets" to whom the writing prophets refer as their forerunners. In point of fact, the very earliest prophets are historians, politicians, and prophets in the narrower sense of the word; and there is no reason to doubt that the societies, even of Samuel's days, called into existence in the way Wellhausen describes, had made a start on all the three lines. We know that some of the writing prophets were also historians; and even modern writers admit that history begins about the time of Samuel. It is remarkable that the book of Chronicles, which, of course, the critics will not admit to be historical, mentions, besides Samuel, among the early writers of history, Nathan and Gad, showing a belief on the part of the writer, at all events, and presumably a national tradition, that these earlier prophets were also writers of history. And then as to the musical occupations of these

prophetic companies, it is a remarkable thing that the persistent tradition of the nation ascribes to David the chief place among poets and musicians, and that these associations existed in his youth, and he himself is seen frequenting them.

If we admit the existence of these so-called schools at all, we must give the inmates something to do connected with the religion and fortunes of the nation. Now, as we find history and poetry coming into prominence just after their institution, and a language fully developed ready to the hand of those who wrote in the eighth century, and as we have no knowledge of any other circles in which such literary exercises could be carried on, it is not a stretch of imagination, but a safe deduction, that we have in these societies of the prophets something that would explain what would otherwise be difficult of explanation—the sudden appearance of finished literary composition—if that is a fact; or, if it is not, something that represents an earlier stage of literary activity. The time and circumstances of the first appearance of these societies are such as would give an impulse to religious life. The quickening of the national pulse in the struggle with the Philistines, the revival of zeal under the influence of Samuel, the retirement of some kind of cenobite life, and the contact of men of kindred spirit in these societies—all these tended to create or develop culture, and would likewise be powerful factors in the production of the religious consciousness of the time. Given the power to write, and such incentives as these, there is no reason why many of the compositions

crowded together into the so-called first literary age may not in whole or in part belong to an earlier period.

In view of an activity like this, we are not so much at a loss to understand how it came about that readers were common at the time of the first writing prophets, and how the religious vocabulary was well developed. We do not require to suppose that these societies retained within themselves all the culture of the times—far from it; but they would be rallying-points and powerful aids to its general support and propagation. We have also—what is quite in keeping with the references of Amos and Hosea to former prophets—a succession of men such as Nathan, Gad, Iddo, and others, who must be taken to be actual historical characters, and who are described as "prophets," or "seers." We have no reason to suppose that they were of a class opposed to or out of harmony with the prophetic companies. If it is not to such men that Amos and Hosea refer, we know of no others; if they are the men, then we get men of flesh and blood such as were the prophets whose writings are before us—men who were quite capable of handing on the lamp of learning such as existed in that age, and, what was of more importance, of keeping the torch of religious truth burning. It is not a great stretch of imagination to think of these men, in their intercourse with one another, and in the assemblies of the people that gathered about them, encouraging one another and animating one another by reciting the deeds of valour and the victories of faith of their forefathers, the patriarchs and the

judges, tuning their harps to patriotic religious songs composed to celebrate memorable deeds, and forecasting the future of their nation which such deeds led them to expect. If we regard men like these as the natural guardians of the popular traditions, we shall be at no loss to understand how these traditions are tinged with religion, nay, steeped in religion, to such an extent as to mark them out from the popular mythological tales of other early nations. They have all the appearance, not of tales of folk-lore gathered up from the mouths of the people and touched up for a national and religious end,¹ but of traditions piously treasured up, brooded over and protected by men who of old were imbued with religious feeling and impressed with the conviction of a Divine Hand guiding their nation's history. Cut and carve them as we may, by eliminating "later additions," and so forth, they cannot be resolved ultimately into mere fanciful stories, told for amusement, freaks of a playful imagination, indulged in for their own sake. In the simplest narratives there are touches of insight: reduced to their barest originals they are pervaded with a purpose. By the time of Hosea we can see (Hosea xii. 3, 4, 12) that the stories of the patriarchs were not only well known, but used, we may say, as texts for discourses, and handled in a homiletic and didactic manner—a proof that they had been long known and treasured in prophetic circles, and were regarded, not as odds and ends of stories, but as parts of a connected history.

¹ Wellhausen, p. 294.

Our purpose is not primarily to inquire into the origin and mode of composition of the earlier historical books, but to test their historical value; and our present argument is to show the sort of men who were the guardians and vouchers of the tradition. The point to which we have come, however, has an essential bearing on the question of the composition of the books. In the Hebrew canon the books from Joshua on to the Second Book of Kings are designated "the earlier prophets," the idea underlying this title being that the books proceeded from prophetic men; and a fair consideration of the facts that have been stated will lead to the conclusion that the supposition is not a mere unfounded conjecture. It is remarked by Wellhausen, as we have just seen, that the books in question have all a strong prophetic tinge, which, of course, he places late. But it is also admitted that parts at least of the books of Judges and Samuel, and an element in the book of Genesis, belong to the first literary age. Now, if it should turn out that this first literary age was one in which prophetic tendencies were well developed, or at least prophetic principles were firmly fixed in their main conceptions, there will be no necessity of separating by wide intervals of time parts of the same narrative which otherwise hang well enough together. This view of the subject, however, will be more fully considered in the next chapter. In the meantime attention is to be drawn here to another feature of these historical books, which is closely related to the mode of their composition and their historical value—namely, the

minute accuracy they exhibit in matters of topography.

Perhaps no country has been more attentively examined in connection with its history and literature than Palestine; and those who have made the most careful examination have testified to the extraordinary correspondence, to the minutest detail, between the Biblical accounts and the localities in which they are placed. This does not, of course, warrant us in saying straightway that the narratives are strictly historical, but it has an important bearing on the mode of composition of the books. It will, on reflection, be admitted that a writer or speaker nowhere runs greater risk of tripping and falling into error than when dealing with details of topography. It is a case in which mere popular and oral recital is almost sure after a time to be at fault, and in which memory cannot long be safely trusted. It is also to be noted that the remarkable physical configuration of Palestine, and the graphic pictorial style of Hebrew diction, made the danger of falling into mistakes of this kind immensely greater. The Hebrew writers are continually painting the scene of their narratives, not only reproducing the words and gestures of the speakers, but telling us how they "lifted up their eyes" and saw this and that; and the conformation of the country is so remarkable, its variations of scene, climate, and physical condition such, that the accuracy of delineation, which bears the closest investigation, is nothing short of marvellous. It is indeed only in comparatively recent times that this has been fully brought to light; for

not only the Crusaders, but even the early Christian monks who resided in the country, made mistakes in identifications of Biblical sites, which it has been left to travellers and explorers of our own century to rectify.¹ It would not be difficult to find in modern authors writing from memory or with imperfect information, instances to prove how easily mistakes may be fallen into. Walter Scott, *e.g.* (and no doubt it is not a solitary instance), makes one of his characters² speak of Roseneath as an island, a kind of mistake never committed by a Biblical writer. An instructive example may be taken from a passage in Wellhausen's own book, in which, in connection with the story of the destruction of the cities of the plain, mention is made of "the smoke of the furnace which Abraham saw from the Jewish shore the morning after the catastrophe."³ It is true the English translation makes the mistake more glaring; but even in the original⁴ the words do not accurately represent the statement of the Biblical writer, according to which⁵ Abraham was not near the Dead Sea at the time of the occurrence, but at Mar-re, and could not even have seen the shore. What the narrator says is that Abraham "got up early in the morning to the place where he had stood before Jahaveh," and that "he looked *toward* Sodom and

¹ The Quarterly Statements of the Palestine Exploration Fund are full of corrections of such early mistakes. See, *e.g.*, the Statements for 1875, p. 89 ff.; and for 1876, pp. 11 ff., 37 f., 168; for 1877, p. 33 ff. To name no other places, Robinson mentions that even such a famous place as Beth-el was not known accurately to the monks for centuries, the name of the true site being preserved solely among the common people.—Biblical Researches, second edition, vol. i. p. 449.

² Heart of Mid-Lothian, chap. xl.

³ Hist. of Israel, p. 525.

⁴ The original is "vom jüdäischen Ufer aus aufsteigen sah"—Geschichte, 1878, p. 329.

⁵ Gen. xix. 27.

Gomorrhah, and toward all the land of the plain, and lo! the smoke of the country went up as the smoke of a furnace." It is a great distance from Hebron to the Dead Sea, and mountains intervene for the most part. Robinson tells us that he ascended the hills to the east of the town in hopes of obtaining a view of the country, but the prospect was limited towards the east and north by higher hills near at hand. Next day, however, on ascending the hill to the west, he found the prospect towards the east and south and west very extensive, Kerak (on the eastern side of the Dead Sea) being very clearly distinguishable.¹ A more glaring mistake is made in Lenormant's 'Ancient History of the East,' where we have such a collocation as this: "Between Bethel and Hai in the rich pastures of the lower Jordan,"² though these places are far from the river. In striking contrast we find the Biblical writer particularly stating that the place of Abraham's encampment was a *mountain* east of Bethel,³—a situation from which, as travellers have pointed out,⁴ Lot could have obtained that view of the fertile Jordan valley which determined his choice.⁵ And once more, as an instance how in statements of topography one will readily make a slip in matters with which he is well acquainted, a recent critical writer tells us that Elijah, on the memorable occasion of his sacrifice on Mount Carmel, "hurried the priests of Baal down to the brook Jabbok, and slew them

¹ Biblical Researches, second edition, vol. ii. pp. 82, 85.

² English translation, vol. i. p. 81. ³ Gen. xii. 8.

⁴ Stanley, Sinai and Palestine, third edition, p. 217 f.

⁵ Gen. xiii. 10.

there,"¹—a much more "considerable mistake" than that which Wellhausen thinks he finds in the Biblical writer's account of Elijah's movements.²

As an example, on the other hand, of the very minute accuracy of the Biblical narratives in this respect, we may take the account of Elijah's sacrifice on Mount Carmel.³ The scene of the narrative, which had been little visited by travellers, was found on the eastern extremity of Carmel, overlooking the great plain of Esdraelon, and was known to the natives by the name *El-Muhrakah*, *The Burnt* (or the place of burning); and all who have visited it, and compared it with the account given of the events of that memorable day, testify to the correspondence in minutest details between the narrative and the locality.⁴ Now all this goes to show that there is more in these stories than what Wellhausen calls "a local colour which bespeaks a local origin."⁵ Much less can we admit what he asserts in regard to the patriarchal stories, that their significance is "entirely bound up with the locality,"⁶ and that "for the most part we have the product of a countless number of narrators, unconsciously modifying each other's work."⁷ The ordinary reader will find it very hard to believe that in "the manifold variants and repetitions of the same stories" this feature of minutely accurate local picturing could have been

¹ Allan Menzies, *Natural Religion*, p. 135.

² *Hist. of Israel*, p. 292, note.

³ 1 Kings xviii.

⁴ A graphic account is given by Van de Velde, vol. i. p. 320 ff., with which may be compared Stanley, *Sinai and Palestine*, third edition, p. 353.

⁵ *Hist. of Israel*, p. 327.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 325.

⁷ *Hist. of Israel*, p. 327.

preserved. And when we take into account that not only in the stories of the patriarchs, but everywhere in the historical books, this accuracy is maintained, and bear in mind the liability to error which is inherent in oral transmission, we have a problem to solve which cannot be brushed aside by these *obiter dicta* of Wellhausen. If these stories could not have maintained their topographical accuracy in oral tradition, then they were written by men who knew the localities and had them before their eye; and if the stories have not foundation in fact, then the writer—and be it remembered this is one of the admitted earliest class of writings—was not merely a spinner or retailer of myths, but he was a most accomplished writer of romance. A recent French writer, who has made in all seriousness a *reductio ad absurdum* of criticism by denying almost entirely the pre-exilian existence of literature in Israel,¹ has the courage of his theory here, and it is interesting to observe how he accounts for this striking accuracy of topographical details. He fancies a company of theologians at the time of the restoration sitting down to see who would give the most highly coloured account of early times; and the one, for example, who by report at least knew most of Egypt, would take in hand the story of the exodus, and so on.

¹ Maurice Vernes, *Les Résultats de l'Exégèse Biblique*, p. 50. If refutation is necessary of such a view, it is found in the fact that the names of Bible places have been in most cases recovered from the mouths of the peasantry—a proof that the story has clung to the site from most ancient time. Were Vernes's view correct, we should have had a number of sites such as the Crusaders and monks determined *by the look*, whereas we have these ancient names, often unintelligible to the natives, and unassociated, to their knowledge, with any ancient event. And this aspect of British research should be fairly faced in critical reconstructions of history and books.

He does not tell us how many men, each with special knowledge of a locality, were engaged in this work; but such a fancy, by its exaggeration, gives us some idea of the care that must have been bestowed on small details in the writing of these Old Testament stories—a care far above what we would expect in the case of plastic material modified by hundreds of reciters, and touched and retouched till the time of the captivity and after it.¹ Whatever we may say about them, this characteristic of these narratives must raise our estimate of the literary care and ability of these writers; and if we find them so careful in this class of details, we may be prepared to give more heed to them when they give us particulars of another kind.

No doubt this minute topographical accuracy does not in itself vouch for the historical truth of the narratives, and to some extent there is reason for the reproach of a Continental writer² that “English Palestine research, by its apologetic tendency, runs the risk of failing to secure recognition as a complete international science.” German scholars, he says, while quite as well aware as the English investigators of the close connection of this specialty with the scientific interpretation of the Bible, “have at the same time the historical, critical, and philological preparation which is necessary to successful labour.” In their view, it is “an essential point that Palestine research remain in the closest contact with these other branches of study,” and

¹ Wellhausen, *Hist. of Israel*, p. 294.

² Socin, in the *Expositor*, third series, vol. ii. p. 24 ff.

that "a scholar who writes on the geography of Palestine, shall first have made himself thoroughly familiar with the problems and results of Old Testament criticism," for "only there can he form a judgment concerning the real history of Israel." All very good; but it may be contended as strenuously, on the other hand, that the said German scholars should, in estimating the literary products of Israel, take into account this feature of them to which we call attention, and not merely dismiss them with the remark that they have a strong local colouring. Perhaps if German scholars had gone more out into the broad light of day, and looked at these narratives in connection with the places to which they relate, instead of keeping their science, to use Socin's own words, "under ground, in the esoteric circle of special students," they would have attained results more acceptable to average common-sense. No doubt, strictly speaking, the identification of the place does not prove the historic truth of the event associated with it. It is, it may be admitted, "unjustifiable to assume without further investigation that the list of stations in the wandering in the wilderness is the work of Moses;"¹ nay, we are not, strictly speaking, entitled to assume that the Israelites ever travelled that way at all. The list may be a mere feat of archaeological research, drawn up by those who knew the ordinary route through these parts. Neither does the topography of Mount Carmel, which suits the story of Elijah as exactly as if it was written on the spot, prove even that Elijah

¹ Socin, *l. c.* Compare Wellhausen, *Hist. of Israel*, p. 350.

ever existed; and Dean Stanley was not strictly correct when he asserted¹ that "the wells of Beersheba in the wide frontier-valley of Palestine are indisputable witnesses of the life of Abraham." But neither was Carlyle justified in assuming from the ruins of St. Edmundsbury that St. Edmund ever existed; nor do the stones stuck here and there in the plain of Leipzig, telling where so many thousands of men had their position under certain commanders, prove that a great battle was ever fought there. Let us criticise our authorities by all means. But let us not turn away from such firm palpable aids to criticism as we possess, to "underground" canons which only esoteric students can comprehend. It will occur to many, that if it is unjustifiable to construct a map of Palestine showing the tribal divisions, a good many other maps will have to be accepted with reserve. The ordinary reader who believes, with Thomas Carlyle, that "man has ever been, in spite of wide-spread calumnies to the contrary, a veracious creature," will be anxious to know why it is that so much criticism is necessary in regard to matters of Biblical history such as are accepted without question in other fields. Wellhausen's off-hand remark about "plastic and living materials" and stories whose significance was "entirely bound up with the locality," is quite insufficient to explain the fact that this minute accuracy is not confined to one set of stories nor to one locality. The point of the story so often turns upon the local situation, and stories so constructed in one locality fit in so exactly

¹ Sinai and Palestine, p. 148.

to others constructed for other localities, as in Abraham's sojourns at different spots, making a connected history, that this explanation is altogether too superficial. Instead of the materials being so plastic as he supposes in the ninth and eighth centuries, it is evident that the writers of these narratives were handling no shadowy myth, but writing of men who were as real to them as men of their own age. We are, in short, in these narratives, not at the stage of floating vague tradition, but at a time at which men wrote with care about persons and events that they considered historical. What more is implied in this fact we shall consider more fully in the next chapter.

In our endeavour to estimate the amount of literary and educational activity in ancient Israel, we must not overlook the work of the priests, who were at least as early and as well marked a class as the prophets. Although a great part of the admitted literature is of a popular or prophetic character, yet Wellhausen has told us (above, p. 61) that at an early period "certain collections of laws and decisions of the priests" were also committed to writing. The "legal documents" also, and "family reminiscences," which furnished materials for the first historiography, were most probably, as in other countries, under priestly custody; and Stade says¹ that it was under priestly influence that the patriarchal legends assumed their peculiar form. All this implies a considerable degree of literary activity, and the preservation of legal and

¹ *Geschichte*, vol. 1. p. 145.

family documents presupposes such activity in a still earlier time. Though their literary labours may have been chiefly technical, and restricted to a somewhat professional circle, yet in their work as popular educators the priests must take rank with the prophets. The bearing of this on the more outward features of the religion will be seen in the sequel.¹

¹ See particularly chap. xv. p. 391.

CHAPTER V.

TESTIMONY OF THE NINTH AND EIGHTH CENTURIES TO THE ANTECEDENT HISTORY.

Following up the conclusions of preceding chapters, the inquiry is raised whether it is possible, from the admitted writings, to determine the outstanding facts of the previous history—Not a question of the order of composition of books, or of origin of observances, but an appeal to the consciousness of the nation—Amos and Hosea are found to hold essentially, for the period succeeding Moses, the same scheme of history which is by modern critics pronounced to be late and unhistorical—Their testimony confirmed by the song of Deborah—In regard to patriarchal history, the intimations of the prophets, so far as they go, are in accord with the Pentateuch—Wellhausen's dictum in regard to the patriarchal stories examined; an illustration of his method of interpretation—His explanation of the genealogical system: its failure to account for Abraham—His canon at fault in regard to "outward features"—Peculiarities distinguishing patriarchal stories from Gentile legends—Nebular hypothesis of early history—Conclusion: that the eighth century is a time of broad historic day, when Israel had a definite account to give of itself and of its early history.

IN the preceding chapters it has been argued that the admitted writings of the so-called earliest literary age imply a time of antecedent preparation and

training of both a literary and a religious kind. We have also seen that the earliest writing prophets appeal to prophetic men of kindred spirit before them, and we have endeavoured to show that there is evidence of such a prophetic line from Samuel downwards, capable of giving to the history the peculiar cast in which it appears in the historical books. One feature of these books, the minute accuracy in topographical detail, has led to the conclusion that the writers of history in the so-called earliest literary period, unless they are to be regarded as clever romancers, wrote down what to them was not vague, plastic myth, but actual history. And it is claimed that this minute correspondence of locality with narrative is inconsistent with the account given by critical writers of the origin of these narratives and the trustworthiness of the writers.

Let us now go a step further and open up a new line of inquiry: Is it possible from the writings to which we have restricted ourselves to draw any conclusions with regard to the outstanding events of the antecedent history? We have precluded ourselves from accepting the books composing the Pentateuch as evidence regarding the period to which they relate. But it may be possible, from the books which we are allowed to use, to derive such indications as will either confirm the books which are reserved or show in what manner their un-historical statements (as they are called) arose. That we need not expect to find in the prophetic writings anything like a full account of the history is evident from the very nature of the compositions,

to say nothing of their very limited bulk. But by a comparison of these with one another and with other books, we may be able to draw a parallel or a contrast between the modes in which the history of the time to which we refer was regarded by the respective writers, and reach whatever conclusions we can as to the actual facts.

As to the method of this inquiry, it is to be remarked that what we seek primarily to determine is neither the order of composition of books nor the history of religious observances. The method usually followed by apologists is to show by "references" or "quotations" that the books of the Pentateuch, for example, are older than the prophetic writings. It is obvious, however, that the argument from references and quotations may be turned the other way; and this mode of reasoning becomes very precarious and unsatisfactory, since questions of integrity and genuineness in the books supposed to be referred to are sure to arise. On the other hand, the method pursued generally by critical writers of tracing the history of the religion by the aid of outward rites and observances is liable to similar and other equally strong objections, which will be stated farther on.¹ Our point is, that in the writings of contemporaneous prophets, and admitted productions of the same age, we get upon firm ground. The slightest glance at the prophetic literature will show that the history turned upon something very different from written books or outward observances. By the time of the earliest writ-

¹ See chap. xiii. p. 328.

ing prophets it is evident that certain fundamental religious conceptions are firmly grasped—a certain view is entertained of the antecedent course of religious history; for proof of which appeal is made not to written books or outward observances, but to the general consciousness of the nation. If we can penetrate to the origin of these, we shall come at a knowledge of the nation's religious life and history in a much more effectual way than by settling the order in which books were written and legal codes came into existence; and it will perhaps be found that, standing on such firm ground, we shall be in a better position to pronounce judgment on those other questions of books and institutions. What we propose, therefore, to do in the present chapter, is to inquire what views prevailed, in the period to which we have restricted ourselves, in regard to the antecedent religious history, and what inferences may safely be drawn as to the actual facts.

Confining ourselves at the outset to Amos and Hosea, we take it to be quite clear that by their time a certain outline (and from the limited materials and nature of the books we cannot expect more) of the past history of the nation, was firmly fixed and held undisputed in the national mind. Particular stress must be laid on the fact that it is not the individual testimony of two men that we have on this point, but the testimony of the generation they addressed. All the proof Amos advances, when he refers to past history, is the appeal to the knowledge of his hearers, "Is it not so, O house of

Israel?" (Amos ii. 11.) And the testimony is all the stronger here because the people are unwilling witnesses, the prophet's references to the past being made not for the purpose of flattering national vanity, but of rebuking national backsliding. The argument used here is one which critical writers can employ with effect when occasion requires. Daurmer,¹ for example, argues from the statement of Amos regarding worship in the wilderness (Amos v. 26 ff.), not merely that it was a fact that Israel for forty years worshipped not Jahaveh but Moloch, but also that this was a well-known and undisputed fact in the prophet's days.

Attention may be drawn, at the outset, to the manner in which these two men address their generation and speak of their nation. "Israel" stands not only for the northern kingdom, but for the combined people. And when one message is given to the whole under one name, and when Hosea has reached the stage of personifying Israel as a dearly loved but faithless wife, or as a first-born son, it is evident that we are far beyond the stage—if ever there was such a stage—when the nation grew into one from merely contiguous or even related tribes. If Hosea is to be believed, Israel was *one* people from the time of the exodus. But to pass from this, let us note certain definite points in the scheme of history held by these men.

The *first* point to be noticed is, that Amos and Hosea agree in going back to the deliverance from Egypt and the guidance through the desert as not

¹ Feuer und Moloch-dienst der Alten Hebräer, p. 49. So others.

only well-attested and undisputed facts, but as also events of the deepest religious import. Thus Amos utters the word of Jahaveh "against the whole family which I brought up from the land of Egypt, saying, You only have I known of all the families of the earth" (Amos iii. 1, 2); and speaking of the great things God had done for them in the past, he says: "Yet destroyed I the Amorite before them, whose height was as the height of the cedars, and he was strong as the oaks; yet I destroyed his fruit from above, and his roots from beneath. Also I brought you up out of the land of Egypt, and led you forty years in the wilderness, to possess the land of the Amorite" (Amos ii. 9-11). Similarly Hosea refers to the days of the youth of the nation—"the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt" (Hos. ii. 15). "When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt" (xi. 1). Twice he uses the words, "I am Jahaveh thy God from the land of Egypt" (xii. 9, xiii. 4), basing upon this fact the claim of their God to undivided allegiance: "Thou shalt know no god but me, and beside me there is no saviour" (xiii. 4). And to denote the tender care with which they were watched in the desert, he says: "I found Israel like grapes in the wilderness; I saw your fathers as the first-ripe in the fig-tree at her first season" (ix. 10). "I did know thee in the wilderness, in the land of great drought" (xiii. 5). Here there is one clear line, boldly drawn—one great epoch in the history vouched for by the strongest testimony we can in the circumstances expect. These two prophets—

men of very different temperaments, who have very different attitudes to the people of their time—take it as a thing not gainsaid, that from the exodus Israel had been distinguished by special religious privilege manifested in a remarkable history. The way in which they refer to these events—in general terms, no doubt, but with a hortatory and didactic purpose—leaves no room for doubt that the belief was already ingrained in the nation that, to use the current phrase, they were a chosen race. The divine choice had been signally exhibited in the events of the exodus and the conquest of Canaan; and that these events were not regarded as isolated or accidental occurrences, is proved by the insistence on the continual guidance and instruction which had been communicated through “prophets,” and the bestowal of other privileges which are always being brought to remembrance.

A *second* significant point, very observable in the writings of these two prophets, is the pre-eminence assigned by both of them to the southern kingdom, and the special importance of the house of David. Amos comes all the way from the south of Judah to testify against the northern kingdom, and his very first words are: “Jahaveh shall roar from Zion, and utter His voice from Jerusalem” (Amos i. 2). Even the sins for which Judah is reproved give a hint of special religious privilege: “Because they have rejected the law of Jahaveh, and have not kept His statutes” (ii. 4). And then his anticipation of coming blessing is expressed in the words: “I will raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and

close up the breaches thereof; and I will raise up his ruins, and I will build it as in the days of old" (ix. 11). All this, it will be remembered, though spoken by a native of the south, comes from a prophet whose mission was to the northern kingdom. And even more striking are the references of Hosea, a native of the northern kingdom itself. Having at the outset of his prophecy said, "I will no more have mercy upon the house of Israel that I should in any wise pardon them," he immediately adds, "But I will have mercy upon the house of Judah, and will save them by Jahaveh their God" (Hos. i. 6, 7).¹ So again, "Though thou, Israel, play the harlot, yet let not Judah offend" (iv. 15); and finally, though Judah is classed with Ephraim in many places, yet the prophet's anticipation is again like that of Amos. He speaks of the reunion of the two kingdoms (i. 11), and describes it in these terms: "Afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek Jahaveh their God, and David their king; and shall fear Jahaveh and His goodness in the latter days" (iii. 5). This, then, is an additional point gained, that even in the northern kingdom, if the testimony of Hosea and his contemporaries is of any value, the pre-eminence in religious standing of the southern kingdom was acknowledged, and the divine promise of a "sure house" to David² was accepted by the nation generally as a substantial fact.

¹ Hos. xi. 12 is doubtful: "Ephraim compasseth me about with lies, and the house of Israel with deceit; but Judah yet ruleth with God, and is faithful with the saints." Others render, "And Judah is yet defiant towards God, and towards the All-Holy One, who is faithful."

² See 2 Sam. vii. 16, xxiii. 5.

Thirdly, While, however, the prophets thus represented their God as having chosen and guided Israel from the days of Egypt, and bestowed on the nation special privileges, there is to them another aspect of the history. For they as persistently maintain that Israel, from the earliest times, had proved unfaithful to their God, and fallen into the deepest sins. Amos, in the survey which he makes, in chapters i. and ii. of his book, of the nations for whose redoubled iniquities the sentence of divine punishment would not be turned away, does not except the two kingdoms of the children of Israel, and singles out the particular sins for which they would respectively be chastised. Indeed the whole burden of his prophecy is just this, that though God had raised up of their sons for prophets, and of their young men for Nazirites (ii. 11),¹ though He had from time to time made known what He was to do through His prophets (iii. 7), though He had known Israel alone of all the families of the earth (iii. 2), yet doom was impending over both kingdoms for their unfaithfulness; and, just because of their special privileges, they would be the more severely dealt with. Still more impressively is the same truth taught by Hosea. Under the figures of the dearest earthly relationships, he represents Israel now as the wife of Jahaveh who has been unfaithful to her husband (i. 2, &c.), and again as a tenderly reared

¹ "The Nazirites were a class dating very far back: we find illustrious examples of them in Samson and Samuel in the time of the Judges, and no doubt there were prophets contemporary with them, though, with the exception of the prophetess Deborah, they are only incidentally mentioned (Judges vi. 8) till the time of Samuel."—A. B. Davidson in *Expositor*, third series, vol. v. p. 39.

son who was bent to backsliding (xi. 7), though the divine love still yearned over them (iii. 1, xi. 8 ff. &c.) "By a prophet Jahaveh brought Israel out of Egypt, and by a prophet was he preserved" (xii. 13; cf. Micah vi. 4). God had "spoken unto the prophets, and multiplied visions, and by the ministry of the prophets had used similitudes" (xii. 10); yea, they had been "hewn by the prophets" (vi. 5) for their stubbornness and iniquity; yet they had "transgressed the covenant" (vi. 7), had "wandered from" their God (vii. 13), "transgressed His covenant, and trespassed against His law" (viii. 1). For their iniquities, which are specified over and over again, and set in new lights to make them more odious, they are told that "the days of visitation are come, the days of recompense are come" (ix. 7); that "the iniquity of Ephraim is bound up, his sin laid up in store" (xiii. 12); and not even the grave will be able to cover him from the divine judgment (xiii. 14). Compare Amos ix. 2-4.

But, *fourthly*, the prophetic voice has still another tone, which is continually heard in the midst of these denunciations and threatenings. Both these prophets, addressing the people of the northern kingdom, declare, as we have seen, that the southern kingdom of Judah, though also apostate and doomed to punishment (Amos ii. 4), has not so far fallen from original fidelity; so it will be more mercifully dealt with (Hosea i. 7), and will form the rallying-point for a remitted nationality based on better principles (Amos ix. 11; Hosea i. 11). Through the severest denunciations shines ever a gleam of hope,

based on the faithfulness and love of Jahaveh Himself: "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim? Mine heart is turned within me, my compassions are kindled together. I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger, I will not return to destroy Ephraim: for I am God, and not man; the Holy One in the midst of thee" (Hosea xi. 8, 9).

Now all this agrees most strikingly with what we have called the Biblical theory of the history.¹ There is the insisting upon a special manifestation of favour to Israel at the first, in the deliverance from Egypt and guidance through the desert; there is the emphasis laid on the succession of teachers divinely appointed, and of laws and statutes for the people's instruction and guidance. There is the promise of the perpetuity of the house of David as the basis of the restoration of national unity. There is, on the other hand, with equal emphasis, the assertion of the fact that Israel had been unfaithful to the nation's God, and unworthy of the privileges bestowed. And further, there is the threatening of punishment for this unfaithfulness, reiterated in various forms and couched in the sternest tones. And finally, there is the assurance that there will not be an end of the people, but that out of the overthrow and ruin there will arise a revived and purified nation, united under one king, obedient to their one God. We have in fact here, as early as we are allowed by the limitations we have imposed upon ourselves, the prophetic

¹ See chapter II. p. 28 ff.

philosophy of history which is the guiding principle of the prophets to the end. Favour shown, sin abounding, punishment descending, a remnant saved,—this will be found to be the scheme taught by all the prophets; the scheme on which they explain their whole history. The teaching as to the *remnant*, so characteristic of the great prophets, comes out quite incidentally in Amos, and is all the more striking on that account. Thus: “The city that used to go out (to war) a thousand (strong) shall *have a remnant of a hundred*” (Amos v. 3; see R. V.) So also, “It may be that the Lord of hosts will be gracious unto the remnant of Joseph” (v. 15). The early existence of a succession of prophets is an illustration of the same principle. That they existed is a proof of the fact: the appeal to the fact shows that the theory of the history was formed. It is this aspect of the history which furnishes the key to that persistent expectation of good in the latter day which, in conjunction with the unshaken belief in the perpetuity of David’s house, produced the Messianic idea, increasing ever in brightness as the night of the nation’s history closed around them.¹

But the Biblical theory of the history is declared by our modern historians to be a late conception, overlaid by late writers upon original documents which knew nothing of it. “How is it,” asks Kuenen,² “that the picture of ancient Israel which we have thus recovered [*i.e.*, the picture which he thinks criticism warrants] differs so very widely from the current conception of its religious condition? The

¹ See Note X. ² *National Religions*, p. 69 f. Comp. above, p. 54.

reason is not far to seek. The current conception is not derived from the special traits of which I have reminded you, but from the general reviews of the popular religion which the Israelitish historians lay before us—the introduction to the book of Judges (Judges ii. 6, iii. 6), and the retrospect of the fates of the kingdom of the ten tribes (2 Kings xvii. 7-23, 34-41).” Now if we turn to these reviews, which are thus set down as late, they are precisely in the tone of the prophets Amos and Hosea, the very earliest witnesses to whom we are allowed to appeal. What is the review of the period of the Judges? The children of Israel did evil against Jahaveh, though He had manifested special favour to them; He sold them into the hand of this enemy or that; they cried to Him in their trouble, He raised up a deliverer who saved them; the land had rest; again they sinned; and again the same cycle was repeated. This summary of the period might have been written by Hosea himself, or by Amos; and if there is any truth in what they say about prophets before them, any one from the days of Samuel might have written it. Precisely to the same effect is the summary of the history of the Kings in all essential points, only there is the deeper colouring of more heinous transgression, because mercy had been longer prolonged, and the threatening of heavier punishment, because all means of reformation had failed.

Now be it remembered the modern historians say that the same century that produced the writings of Amos and Hosea produced also—in an earlier part of it perhaps—the stories contained in the book of

Judges, but that these summaries or reviews belong to a late time. I have proved that they need not be later than Amos or Hosea; in fact, that they exhibit the belief current in this century, the very time in which the narratives themselves are said to have been written. In other words, the narratives and the summaries may be of the same date and may have been written by the same persons.

I take it, then, that the views of Israel's past history given by the prophets of the eighth century were the views entertained by the nation generally in their time. These views, so far as they amount to a comprehensive conception of the history as a whole, agree exactly with the views of the Hebrew historians; and so far as reference is made to actual occurrences in the history, the prophets are at one with the historians. The great landmarks are clearly traceable: the deliverance from Egypt, the guidance in the wilderness, the conquest of Canaan, the continuance of God-guided men in the nation, the pre-eminence of the house of David. As to the history subsequent to Moses, we are already at a time when it is regarded by the nation in that peculiar light which modern historians call late and unhistorical; and from the tone of the prophets Amos and Hosea, we may conclude that this view of the matter was common and of old standing.

We are not, however, left entirely to inferences from the words of these prophets. Though at present restricted in the use of other documents, we have one precious relic in the song of Deborah, which even modern critics generally allow must

have come down from the age of the Judges. So far as its references bear upon the subject before us, they agree substantially with the view of the age we are considering. At the time the song was composed—the earlier time when the tribe of Dan was still on the seaboard (Judges v. 17)—the unity of all the tribes is a matter firmly fixed in the national consciousness. Israel is throughout one (see verses 2, 7-9, 11), though the powerful tribe of Judah is not mentioned; and God's gracious dealings with Israel in the past, especially the guidance in the wilderness, are forcibly referred to (verses 4, 5). One cannot read this remarkable song without coming to the conclusion that the rugged and unformed age of the Judges, as we are accustomed to regard it, was animated by a spirit that was far from being merely warlike; and that, under the rough exterior presented to us in the stories of the heroes, there were lofty conceptions of God's character and a feeling of consecration on the part of those who led the nation. Dr. Davidson has said¹ that "if we possessed a few more utterances of the prophetic mind in this age, in place of the external histories of rude soldiers, we should probably be led to form a higher conception even of the religious condition of the people under the Judges." But is it *quantity* of written material that is decisive here? Is not this one example enough to show the religious consciousness of the nation in full energy—enough to connect the age of the Judges with the age of the prophets, and to explain the appeal of the latter to an antecedent

¹ *Expositor*, third series, vol. v. p. 54.

chain of prophetic testimony? For, as Dr. Davidson again says,¹ the prophets "were the efflorescence, season after season, of a tree whose roots always stood in the soil;" and "we cannot account for the appearance of a succession of such men otherwise than on the supposition that they arose out of a society in the main like-minded with themselves and fitted to give them birth." Bruce's warriors at Bannockburn may seem a miscellaneous concourse of half-civilized men fighting in a rough age because they loved fighting; but the one incident of these men kneeling to God before the battle gives evidence of a deeper spirit. So this song, the utterance of the animating spirit of those times of struggle, serves to explain even the rougher deeds of men, in whom the same spirit was also at work and found expression in its own way. The song of Deborah rises, at first sight, like a broken arch amid ruins, pointing we perceive not whither; but across a gulf of wreck and confusion another broken arch rises in the prophetic period, in line with the former and pointing backwards. Is it unreasonable to conclude that they form the remains of what was once a continuous structure? Have we not, at least, seen enough to convince us that it is arbitrary and unfair to limit the prophetic age, as is done, to a period comparatively recent: and that the "earlier prophets" are substantially in accord with the later in the account they give of their nation's history and religion?

Hitherto we have mostly confined ourselves to the

¹ Expositor, third series, vol. v. p. 164 f.

earliest writing prophets, and endeavoured to determine the view they held of the history from the period of the exodus. When we inquire as to the times anterior to Moses, we find few references in these prophets to guide us. Such as they are, however, they agree with the books of the Pentateuch which refer to that period. When, for example, Amos in his threatening against Edom says (Amos i. 11), "Because he did pursue his brother with the sword, and did cast off all pity," he proves that the story of Jacob and Esau was already current. The descent of the great northern tribes from Joseph is implied in the expression, "the affliction of Joseph" (vi. 6); and the mention of the "high places of Isaac" (vii. 9) is another hint of the general acquaintance of the prophet's hearers with the patriarchal story. So when Hosea in a passing illustration says (Hosea xi. 8), "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim?" he not merely confirms, so far as his word may be taken, the account given in Genesis of the destruction of the cities of the plain, but shows that this tradition was already a national possession. And when the same prophet says (xii. 12), "Jacob fled into the country of Syria; and Israel served for a wife, and for a wife he kept sheep," he does more than vouch for the belief in the single incidents mentioned; for these are inseparable items in a connected story, which is thus guaranteed as well known. Nay, the homiletic manner in which the incidents are handled shows that by this time the

patriarchal history was not merely a string of popular folk-lore, but was a subject of reflection and edification. For the point of the reference probably is not merely that God was the guardian of Israel in all dangers, but that Jacob, in whom the northern kingdom boasted, was but a poor fugitive shepherd serving for a wife, whereas the leader who brought the people from Egypt (mentioned in the next verse) was a prophet and shepherd of the people.¹ This, indeed, is the special value of the references of the prophets to the earlier history, that the story is shown to be not a mere legend *afterwards* worked over in a prophetic spirit, but that it was, as early as we can reach it, the groundwork of prophetic teaching.

Passing now from the prophets to the patriarchal stories in the book of Genesis, what are we to say of the history which they profess to give? These narratives, forming what is called the Jehovistic portion of the book of Genesis, are, as has been already mentioned,² admitted to belong to the first literary age, and indeed to the earlier part of it. Wellhausen in speaking³ of them says: "The materials here are not mythical but national, and therefore more transparent, and in a certain sense more historical" (*viz.*, than the primeval history contained in the earliest chapters of Genesis). Then he goes on to say: "It is true we attain to no historical knowledge of the patriarchs, but only of the time when the stories about them arose in the Israelite

¹ So Bredenkamp, *Gesetz und Propheten*, p. 26.

² *Chap. iii. p. 53.*

³ *Hist. of Israel*, pp. 318, 319.

people: this later age is here unconsciously projected, in its inner and its outward features, into hoar antiquity, and is reflected there like a glorified mirage." What he means is, that certain historical events of "this later age" are dressed up in this legendary form, or accounted for, or lie hid in these stories of times long bygone; and that it is the work of criticism to find out what are the national and "more historical" facts which underlie the legendary accounts. A good example is furnished by him¹ in a passage referring to the origin of these stories. It runs as follows:—

"Even the Jehovistic narratives about the patriarchs belong to the time when Israel had already become a powerful kingdom, Moab, Ammon, and Edom had been subjugated (Gen. xxvii. 29), and vigorous frontier wars were being carried on with the Syrians about Gilead (Gen. xxxi. 52). In Gen. xxvii. 40, allusion is made to the constantly repeated subjugations of Edom by Judah, alternating with successful revolts on the part of the former."

Unless the ordinary reader is prepared submissively to accept all that "scholars tell us," he will do well to turn up the passages here referred to, and form his own judgment as to whether Wellhausen can see farther into a millstone than himself. As to the acuteness of the critical faculty, which is able under such general statements to detect the definite historical events to which they are supposed to relate, it may be mentioned that another critical writer,² who is not behind Wellhausen in confidence

¹ *Hist. of Israel*, p. 464, footnote.

² Maurice Vernes, *Résultats de l'Exégèse*, p. 46 f.

in his own power to read true history out of such indications, places the formation of the legend of the Syrian origin of the patriarchs not earlier than the captivity, when the Hebrews had friendly relations with Mesopotamia. In regard to Wellhausen's view, however, it is surely an extraordinary freak of the legend-spinner to hide his reference to the carrying on of "vigorous frontier wars," under the story of the setting up of a cairn to perpetuate peace. This whole line of argument forces us to suppose that these stories *originated* after the events supposed to be referred to. The question is, Was all the residuum of fact in these stories such events as the subjugation of Moab, Ammon, and Edom, and the border wars in Gilead? Did the nation know nothing of Jacob and his connection with Mesopotamia till the wars arose in Gilead, and had they no traditional belief that they were to be a paramount power till after Moab, Ammon, and Edom were subjugated? And then, as one event after another in their history took place, in the matter-of-fact days and the open light of the monarchy, did they turn every event into another trait in the picture of the patriarchs, till they elaborated out of common history that most extraordinary set of legends which the patriarchal story exhibits? And to crown all, when these events were still fresh in the memory of men, did Hosea and Amos and such men presently make use of these legends to point the moral of their prophecies? It is a most insufficient explanation of these stories to say that they give us "no historical knowledge of the patriarchs, but only of the time

when the stories about them arose." We want at least to know why the facts of history, patent and well known, were dressed up in this fashion; and if there is anything more in the stories than this reference to facts of history, we ought to be told what it is. How is it, in particular, that the patriarchal story, referring, according to this theory, to events quite isolated and even far apart in time and place, should hold so well together in a connected family history?

The modern critical historians are here ready with their theory that these genealogies of the patriarchs are the legendary accounts of the origin and relations of the tribes, and that such stories "grew up" at various localities with which the name of one or another of the legendary forefathers was associated, each locality giving the version that most magnified the tribe in which it lay. "It would be quite possible," says Wellhausen,¹ "to present the composition and relative position of any given people at a given time in a similar way in the form of a genealogical early history;" and he adds² that "the genealogical form lends itself to the reception of every sort of materials." But the attempt to translate these family genealogies and movements into tribal formations and migrations,³ even when made with all the freedom critics assume to themselves, is not by any means so successful as they would have us believe; and Wellhausen's remark might be met with the rejoinder that it would be quite possible to represent the genealogical history of any number of

¹ Hist. of Israel, p. 319.

² Ibid., p. 320.

³ See Note XI.

individuals in the form of accounts of the composition and relative position of peoples at any given time. The question is not what it would be easy to do, but why the thing was done just in this way. Wellhausen confesses the difficulty, though not its magnitude, in regard to what one would consider the most striking of all the patriarchs, Abraham himself. After telling us that "in the patriarchal legend the ethnographic element is *always* predominant," he says:¹ "Abraham alone is certainly not the name of a people like Isaac and Lot; he is somewhat difficult to interpret. That is not to say, that in such a connection as this we may regard him as a historical person; he might with more likelihood be regarded as a free creation of unconscious art. He is perhaps the youngest figure in the company, and it was probably at a comparatively late period that he was put before his son Isaac." We are not informed how late this period was; but we are told positively that at the time of Amos "he scarcely stood at the same stage as Isaac and Jacob."² All this, however, looks very like a breakdown of the theory by which these genealogies were to be explained. One would like to know how much of the story of Isaac, as a popular legend, would be comprehensible without a reference to that of Abraham; or whether it was adjusted at a "comparatively late period" after the "free creation" of

¹ Hist. of Israel, p. 320.

² The only reason conceivable for this assertion is, that Amos mentions the high places of Isaac (vii. 9), but nowhere refers to Abraham. One might as well infer that Amos was not certain of his own parentage because he does not mention the name of his father. Both J. and E. (see Note VIII.) have the story of Abraham, and either or both of them must be earlier than Amos.

Abraham, by unconscious art. And how can the one "locality" be accepted as explaining these stories about such different characters as Abraham and Isaac which yet are "so similar that they cannot possibly be held to be independent of each other"? Students of folk-lore are familiar with variants of a story cropping up at different places. Here we have not only variants at one place, Beer-sheba, in regard to Abraham and Isaac, but also the rise at different places of different stories, which are only comprehensible when all are brought together into a connected whole.

But let us consider what is implied in the assertion that these stories of the patriarchal times give us knowledge only "of the time when the stories arose." The whole question is, When did the stories arise? Suppose we grant for a moment that as written productions they first meet us in the ninth century, that does not imply necessarily that the happy thought occurred at that time to the unknown J. or E. to set down in this romantic dress the history of his time, and of events that were fresh in memory or occurring before the eyes of his readers. If we are to get the time when the stories *arose*, then we must be told when they were first mooted, in what narrow circle they started, how long they were transmitted orally, and how they spread till they became household words in the eighth century, when Amos and Hosea refer to them as undoubted facts. Let us take Wellhausen's own canon in order to find out when the stories *arose*. This is what he says:¹

¹ Hist., p. 319.

“This later age is here unconsciously projected, in its inner and its outward features, into hoar antiquity, and is reflected there like a glorified mirage.” If it is indeed the case that outward as well as inner features are projected backward, then we must find a time when nomad life was the rule, and the land was thinly inhabited, so that the originator of these patriarchal stories may fulfil the conditions. For be it observed, these writers of a “later age” do not describe the patriarchs as bakers or dressers of sycamore-trees like themselves, as the Dutch artists used to paint the patriarchs dressed in knickerbockers. From the time of Solomon men had sat under their vine and their fig-tree; “To the tent!” was only the cry for battle; agriculture was common; the land well peopled long before the ninth century. Who was this J. or E. who could so accurately describe nomad life that had long passed away, and picture the land in a condition in which it could not have been in his own time? He is something more than a spinner of legend; he is a writer of romance. The accuracy of the picture which he draws is attested by modern life in the East, and it is well known how much more lifelike these stories have become since Palestine travel and research have thrown light upon them. And here, again, it might be well if German writers, instead of confining themselves to “underground” criticism, would go forth into the daylight of Eastern life and learn what it teaches. If a writer reflects his age, if a story bears the impress of the time when it arose, then we seek in vain for a time in which to

place the *origin* of these stories, between the early time when nomad life was practicable in Palestine and these modern days of half-settled life. Wellhausen, in fact, is conscious of an incongruity in his position, though he does not confess that it renders the theory untenable. "It is remarkable," he says,¹ "that the heroes of Israelite legend show so little taste for war, and in this point of view they seem to be scarcely a true reflection of the character of the Israelites as known from their history."² And then, turning his back upon his own theory for the moment, he goes on to say that a people "incessantly driven into war not only dreamed of an eternal peace in the future, but also embodied the wishes of its heart in these peaceful forms of the golden age in the past." This is a nice illustration of *lucus a non lucendo* to begin with; and it is quite opposed to his own theory in the second place. Maurice Vernes is more consistent,³ for he regards the accuracy of description of pastoral life in these narratives as another proof of the high culture of the post-exilian period, which could invest the life of the shepherd with such charm; and he hints, besides, that late writers at Jerusalem could have obtained models for their stories from the shepherds on the east of Jordan.

As to the contention that these stories grew up at various localities, it may be freely conceded that stories generally do come from the places at which the events which they relate occurred. It may also be admitted that traditions are coloured to some extent by the age in which they find literary expression.

¹ Hist. of Israel, p. 321. ² See note XII. ³ Résultats, &c., p. 197.

But this applies to any written history—even to those that are written in this nineteenth century. All this, however, is a very different thing from saying that the old traditions of Israel relating to the patriarchal age rest on no foundation of fact in that age, and that they have no positive value beyond the evidence they give of the tendencies of the age in which they first find literary expression. Even if these traditions were first committed to writing in the ninth century—even if they rested on no pre-existing writings,—they were not inventions of the time, but the accepted beliefs of the nation before they could be put forth as matters of common acceptance; and the essential problem before us is to explain how the national beliefs took just this form.

I believe that practically the only answer which modern writers give to this question is, that all nations have delighted in tracing back their history and national institutions to great ancestors, who are but mythical personages, and that Israel has only done the same. It may be freely admitted that we find historical peoples carrying back their history and their genealogy to ancestors lying beyond the range of historic certainty. But sober historians do not on that account reject these legends as of no historic value, or dismiss them as merely the reflections of the times in which they are first committed to writing; it is their part to seek to interpret them, and to discover the earlier historic facts which lie at their foundation. And we cannot object to the application of a similar criticism to the earlier

traditions of Israel, nor think it strange if the facts underlying them turn out in certain respects to be something different from the literal sense of the forms in which they are embodied. It is one thing, for example, to say that a pious veneration or a simple-minded tradition invested with a nimbus of greatness the formative characters of its early history, and quite another thing to say that these characters were formed out of late events by a process of legend-spinning. It is one thing to seek to find out the bare historical events of the lives of Wallace and Bruce; it would be quite another thing to make these heroes the legendary outgrowth of the events that brought about the union of the kingdoms of Scotland and England. In regard, however, to these traditions, two points have to be borne in mind, which mark a contrast between Israelite and Gentile legends.

(1.) The so-called legendary characters are very unlike the legendary characters of pagan myth. There is nothing hazy or indistinct or semi-divine about them. In their doings we see alike the workings of human frailty, the nicest idiosyncrasies, the most strongly marked individuality; there is no effort made to conceal their faults or to set one on a higher pedestal than his neighbour. The characters of Abraham and Isaac, for example, the legends regarding whom are referred to the same localities, and are said to rest on identical facts, are as dissimilar as any two characters in Scripture. And all movements and activities of these early personalities are set in such a framework of time and place,

that if the characters are not drawn from the life, they are the work of a romancer, not of a weaver of fairy tales and legends. Stade himself has said¹ that to ordinary Christians of the present day, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, Saul, David, and Solomon, Samuel and Elijah, are better known than the heroes of their own history, and that for the mass of our people the Biblical history *is* history in general. The reason why these characters make this strong impression on the popular mind is not so much that they are heroes of sacred history, as because their individuality is so strongly marked. The most ordinary reader of the Bible never confounds one of the patriarchs with another, nor thinks of mixing up the deeds of one with the doings of another. It is very different with the heroes of pagan mythology, where, in the dim shadow of a time attempted to be recalled, the figures resemble one another, perform the same feats, and, as we attempt to grasp their characters, fade away into unsubstantial phantoms. If these early figures of Israelite history are the creations of art, it is art of the highest kind; and in any case, it is clear that the legends—if legends they are—are cast in a better mould, and have been preserved in the caskets of a purer national memory.

(2.) Another striking difference is this: Pagan nations trace back their origin and the origin of their institutions to some great ancestor who embodies in himself all the potentialities of his race. The farther back they can place him, the greater dignity is conferred upon the race; the higher the antiquity,

¹ Geschichte, vol. i. p. 4.

the more illustrious the history. Now in the case of Israel we find a series of such ancestors and a succession of men to whom the moulding of the nation's life is attributed. To be parallel with pagan legend, the Israelite tradition ought to ascribe all to Abraham, or even to Heber, the father of the race of the Hebrews. But though to Abraham is traced in a special manner the beginnings of the religion and the ancestry of the race, the story of Jacob-Israel, which is quite different in its cast, is as important a link in the chain of the tradition.¹ And so, though Moses appears as the founder of nationality in a special sense, his greatness is not enhanced either by making the antecedent history a blank, void of all knowledge of religion, or by leaving nothing to be done by his successors. The period of Samuel comes again as a well-marked crisis in the history; and the reigns of David and Solomon have their distinct features as steps in the national development. All this is quite different from the legendary stuff out of which the earlier histories of pagan nations have to be expiscated, and it is simply impossible to make them the inventions of a myth-spinning imagination. The only conclusion we can come to in view of such facts, if we are to attempt to construct Israel's history from the materials before us and not from our own notions, is that these names or characters do represent distinct phases in the growth of the nation, and that it was because they possessed strongly marked characteristics that they

¹ König, *Hauptprobleme der altisraelitischen Religionsgeschichte*, p. 19.

have been depicted with such striking individuality. It is impossible to explain the national belief in these epochs which we find at the clear historical period of the eighth century, without assuming that something characteristic and positive, as matter of fact, attached to each of them, and made its impress on the nation's heart and was preserved in the national memory.

There is a temptation, which is very seductive, to adopt what may be called a nebular hypothesis of early history. Having fixed upon what we consider the earliest historical period, we are apt to suppose that the succession of the race before that period was maintained by existences of a nebular, unformed, half-human character, forgetting that it is only the distance of our standpoint that makes the characters indistinct. Could we get near enough to the age in which Abraham is placed by the Biblical writers, we should discover that it was an age of human beings of parts and passions like ourselves, for that matter; and at all events, of individuals no doubt very much such as these writers depict. Thoreau says in one place:¹ "On beholding a picture of a New England village as it then appeared [viz., in the time of the Indian wars], with a fair open prospect, and a light on trees and river as if it were broad noon, we find we had not thought the sun shone in those days, or that men lived in broad daylight then." Similarly Carlyle, in regard to the 'Chronicle of Jocelin,'² exclaims: "Behold, there-

¹ Walk to Wachusett, quoted in 'Life' by H. A. Page, p. 38.

² Past and Present, Book II. chap. i.

fore, this England of the year 1200 was no chimerical vacuity or dreamland, peopled with mere vaporous Fantasms, . . . but a green solid place, that grew corn and several other things. The sun shone on it; the vicissitude of seasons and human fortunes. . . . In wondrous Dualism, then as now, lived nations of breathing men; alternating, in all ways, between Light and Dark; between joy and sorrow, between rest and toil—between hope, hope reaching high as Heaven, and fear deep as very Hell.” In this matter all depends upon the nearness of the point of view, and modern writers vary in the length of their vision, for some would make not only the patriarchs, but Moses and Joshua, or even David and his contemporaries, little more than “vaporous Fantasms.” The question is, whether at this late time we are in possession of materials that enable us to bridge the gulf of so many centuries, and take our stand in broad daylight, or, at all events, in a light sufficiently bright to enable us to distinguish individuals in the great mass of antiquity. It is not in our present plan to refer to the archæological discoveries of the present century. It may merely be mentioned in passing that those tablets of Tell-el-Amarna, for example, cause to start into life a period that has hitherto been regarded by many as very nebulous, and set us down on the solid soil of Palestine a century before the exodus, among men with very ordinary occupations and very human feelings: and the monuments of Egypt and Assyria carry us back in a very striking way to those ages, and bring them within the sphere of historical

knowledge.¹ Apart from these, however, does not this age of the first writing prophets at once enable us to take up firm standing-ground at *that* period at least, and put us face to face with men who have surely some right to be heard in regard to their nation's history? Although modern historians will assert that this is the earliest writing age (without, however, having proved it), it is evident that it was not an age at which Israel, as a nation, was waking up out of the unconsciousness of antecedent dream-land, and rubbing its eyes and asking whence it came. It has something very definite and positive to say for itself. Wellhausen says that the stories of the patriarchs differ from the traditions in regard to earlier times; and so they do. The question is, whether they are the creations of the national imagination, as he says, or the treasured traditions of the national memory. And when from the writing prophets we can, by the aid of the song of Deborah, not to mention other compositions, pass to firm historical ground in the time of the Judges, it does not seem, after all, to be such an extravagant thing to believe that individuals named Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were positive historical characters, whose existence was stamped indelibly on the popular memory. Some events need no books to preserve them; they are written on the tablets of thousands of hearts, and transmitted with their life-blood to children's children. Suppose, for illustration, that we find public speakers in Scotland in this century appealing to the deeds of Wallace and

¹ See Note XIII.

Bruce, and referring to the battle of Bannockburn, in order to arouse national shame or national enthusiasm, and that the references are not challenged, but set forth in the confident and assured tone of Hosea and Amos, this would surely be convincing proof that these matters were part of the nation's historical possession. Yet if you ask nine out of every ten Scotsmen for a proof of the existence of Wallace and Bruce, or of the occurrence of the battle of Bannockburn, they will probably be at a loss to give it. You could easily show that "Bruce's Address" was written by Burns centuries after the time at which the battle is placed, and he had no ancient documents to go upon; and from the time in which Burns lived—the time of our great wars—you might easily prove that the song was written for a purpose, to stimulate patriotism, and magnify our arms; and you could easily find underlying the character of Bruce a contemporary of the poet distinguished in battle. And then as for old Barbour's Chronicle, we find it so full of discrepancies, and so coloured by superstitious beliefs, that it may be rejected as an untrustworthy document, or set down to a late time—the work of an imitator of the old language of the chroniclers, who projected himself into the distant past. Modern critical rewriting of history, which is often a mere parody of history, is a trick as easily learned as literary parody, and it is often as tiresome. Yet the battle of Bannockburn took place; and the best proof of the fact is, that the whole nation believes it, and has been and is at this moment sensibly

affected in its very vitals by the recollection. So the great events of Israel's history, the turning-points, the points determinative of the whole life and history, are attested by the nation at the earliest time at which we are enabled to look for materials on which an opinion can be based. No reason can be given for the invention of them just at this time, or for the significance which the prophets assign to them. It may be that a fond memory invested with a halo of glory the great fathers of the race; it may also be that a simple piety saw wonders where a modern age would see none. Yet the individuality of the characters is not destroyed, nor are the sequence of events and the delineations of character shown to be the work of a fitful and unbridled imagination.

CHAPTER VI.

THE KEY OF THE CRITICAL POSITION.

The preceding inquiry has given us so far a general confirmation of the Biblical view, and the conclusion has been reached by taking undisputed documents in their natural sense—But since the modern view claims to rest on a critical examination of the documents, we have to consider what the critical sifting amounts to—Stade's statement of the process that has taken place in the canonisation of books—The historical books; how modified in accordance with later views—Critical appeal to contemporary prophetic writings as a check on the historical—Prophetic books, however, have also to be critically sifted: Stade's account of the case—Examples of the critical adjustment of Amos and Hosea—Striking out, allowing for unhistorical ideas—Want of fixed objective standard of appeal—The first principle of criticism, how stated and how misapplied.—The whole controversy, however, turns round the question as to whether the prophets were reformers or originators—Two points eliminated as not in dispute—Still there are three points to be proved before the critical position can be adopted.

“I GREET you at the beginning of a great career, which yet must have had a long foreground somewhere for such a start.” With these words Emerson extended to Walt Whitman a welcome into the literary world; and in a similar way we must greet

the so-called first literary age of Israel. By three distinct lines of inquiry we have examined this age, and from a literary, a religious, and a historical point of view, we conclude that it must have had "a long foreground somewhere for such a start." We have confined ourselves to such books or portions of books as are placed in this period, and we have found that by a safe inference they lead us back to an anterior time and an antecedent condition of things which, substantially, are those represented in the books which profess to give us a record of those times. The testimony of the writing prophets, Hosea and Amos, to the history, is particularly weighty. When they refer to the past history of the nation, they do so as to a matter well known; and when they give a particular representation of the history, they leave no room for doubt that the consciousness of their contemporaries was with them. Now what does this imply? It implies that the facts and ideas were so wrought into the national mind that there was no need to prove or substantiate them, no thought of gainsaying them. And applying the argument we have employed in regard to the literary and religious features of the books, we conclude that a scheme of history like this was not a sudden product, foisted upon their generation by two individuals. Before it could become, as it clearly had become, the settled belief of the whole nation in any one century, there must have been not merely a set of facts on which it was based, but a process of reflection upon them, a holding of them up by some person or persons before the nation's

eyes, or a provision of some kind for keeping them alive in the nation's remembrance. Again, therefore, we are driven back to an antecedent time, during which these traditions took concrete shape, and became, not only recollections of events, but interpretations of them in a religious historical sense. From every point of view, therefore, it appears that the century we are considering is not merely, or not mainly, the starting-point of a new development, but that, preceding it, there is implied a very considerable stage of culture and a long process of religious reflection and education. All this, of course, is not sufficient to establish the existence or composition of the disputed books at the early period to which they relate. It is enough, however, to show that writings of a historical and religious kind, such as they are, might quite well have been composed before what has been provisionally called the first literary age. Moreover, the testimony afforded by Hosea and Amos, and by writings of their century, amounting, as we contend, to the testimony of the nation itself, will be regarded, by some minds at least, as stronger testimony than that of written compositions, and a sufficient guarantee that the disputed books, which profess to relate the earlier national history, at whatever time they may have been written, rest upon and are in accordance with the same tradition, which we find to be a national possession at the period of the undisputed compositions.

So far as we have gone, then, we seem to get a general confirmation of the Biblical theory. And the conclusion at which we have arrived, whatever

may be its value, has not been based upon any of the writings that are said to be late and unhistorical, nor has any attempt been made to strain words beyond their natural sense, or to assume anything that ordinary experience and common-sense do not warrant. According to the modern critical historians, however, the matter is not by any means so simple as this; for the conclusion to which they come, based, as it is claimed, on the same documents critically examined, is very different, as has already been indicated. We must now, therefore, consider somewhat more closely what this critical sifting of the documents amounts to, and on what principles it is carried out, so as to discover, if possible, what residuum of testimony remains to us as authoritative and trustworthy.

A great part of Wellhausen's *History of Israel* is devoted to what he terms "History of Tradition," in which he goes over the historical books in detail, pointing out how later views have been superimposed on earlier accounts, or made to explain or even originate earlier alleged events. Stade, near the beginning of his history, lays down in a preliminary way, and more explicitly, the grounds for this critical sifting. Canonical writings, he says,¹ are usually affected in only too sensible a manner by the process of canonisation. With every act of canonisation there is inseparably connected a thorough revisal and working over—a final redaction, in fact, of the work canonised. The reason for this is, that

¹ *Geschichte*, p. 14 f. I give the substance of the passage instead of a literal translation.

a definite final development of thought is only reached after varied mental movement; and those standing at the end of a chain of development and looking back at the process by which it has been reached, assuming that the final form is alone right, will find blanks and contradictions in the writings that have been composed in the course of this development. The final redaction will seek to fill up the blanks and to smooth down the contradictions; and this gives rise to insertions, omissions, and patching up of the original. Even after canonisation has taken place, writings are exposed to defacement in the interest of some party or tendency which has gained the upper hand and possesses the guardianship of the books.

This working over of the materials of tradition, Stade proceeds, raises special difficulties, inasmuch as the whole material is subjected to a repeated systematic revision to adapt it to the ideas of each successive period at which revision takes place; and though among other peoples the historical traditions have also been remoulded to suit later ideas, nowhere is the process more energetically carried out than where religious interests come into play; for then it is not merely a case of touching up individual details, but a radical refashioning of the whole material of tradition in harmony with the theological system prevailing at the time.

He then goes on to specify the occasions on which the traditions of Israel were thus revised, and the interests in which they were refashioned. The historical matter, he says, underwent three different

revisions. (1.) In the year 621 B.C. was discovered a law-book (the Code of Deuteronomy), which became authoritative and was made the basis of a reform of worship. This code, which professes to come from Moses, has for its chief requirement that "the place which God should choose" on the west side of the Jordan—viz., Jerusalem—was to be the only authorised seat of sacrificial worship. When once this code had gained recognition and ascendancy, there ensued a process—beginning in the end of the reign of Josiah and lasting on till the first part of the exile—of retouching and working over the whole traditional material, in accordance with what had now become standard and accepted views. For, seeing that all the leaders of the nation up to the year 621 had systematically (and naturally) worshipped contrary to the requirements of the Deuteronomic Code, these men, from the time of David and Solomon onwards, must have seemed, in the eyes of a person brought up under the new ideas, nothing better than half heathen. But this was repugnant to his religious experience, and so the traditional matter was revised under the ruling ideas: that Israel from the time of Moses had been a sacred community, that Moses was succeeded by Joshua, Joshua by the Judges, and that Saul's reign was a declension from the divinely appointed organisation of the people. (2.) At a later time the law-book found in 621 was joined with other writings, and the whole, through Ezra's labours, made the law-book of the community. The most recent of the works embraced in this collection was the so-called

Priestly Code, which gives another and more developed view of the history of Israel; and in accordance with this, again, the earlier history was revised, so as to agree with the conditions of this Code. For as a fully developed ritual, claiming to be of Mosaic origin, was now in force, it was necessary to represent ancient Israel as living also under a similar organisation, divided into twelve tribes, with not only a sacred tribe of Levi, but a family of Aaron with special privileges. And whereas the Deuteronomic law had been content to date the unity of worship from the time of Solomon's Temple, the Priestly Code dated it back to the wilderness, and provided the people with a tabernacle. (3.) Finally, the books of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Chronicles were composed about the year 300 B.C., with the view of exhibiting the whole ancient history in the light of the post-exilian Judaism, and in accordance with the circumstances which arose on the basis of the Priestly Code.

These later revisions of the traditional material, it is to be observed, did not, on the theory, obliterate the older traditions, which are still capable of being discovered by patient criticism. In regard to the last revision, Wellhausen says it is a fortunate matter that "Chronicles did not succeed in superseding the historical books upon which it was founded; the older and the newer version have been preserved together."¹ But it is different with the books of Judges, Samuel, and Kings. Here "the whole area of tradition has finally been uniformly covered with

¹ *Hist.*, p. 228.

an alluvial deposit, by which the configuration of the surface has been determined."¹ It is the work of criticism to remove this deposit, to get below it to the earlier form of the tradition, and to assign the various deposits to the dates at which they were deposited. In this process, we are told, "it may stand as a general principle that the nearer history is to its origin, the more profane it is."² "What is usually given out as the peculiar theocratic element in the history of Israel, is the element which has been introduced by the redaction. . . . This pedantic supranaturalism—'sacred history,' according to the approved recipe—is not to be found in the original accounts. In these Israel is a people just like other people; nor is even his relationship to Jehovah otherwise conceived of than is, for example, that of Moab to Chemosh."³

It will now appear why at the outset, to avoid controversy, we left out of account certain portions of the books of Judges, Samuel, and Kings, since these, it is claimed, have undergone a Deuteronomistic revision,⁴ and also those parts of the Pentateuch other than the patriarchal stories of the Jehovist, because the Pentateuch is strongly overlaid with additions in the spirit of the Priestly Code. But the question here arises, Is it possible, and if so, by what means, to separate earlier from late, and to determine the time at which the later supervened upon the earlier parts in those writings that profess

¹ *Ibid.*

² *Ibid.*, p. 245.

³ *Ibid.* p. 235.

⁴ The revision in the spirit of Deuteronomy is usually designated the Deuteronomist, in distinction from the Deuteronomer, or author of the writing found in the Temple.

to be history? To this Stade, and those of his way of thinking, answer in effect that the revisers or redactors were not so skilful as to entirely conceal what they worked upon; that sometimes political events enable us to determine at least whether a piece belongs to the northern or southern kingdom, to pre-exilian or post-exilian¹ times, and so forth. But Stade says very truly² that if we are to fix the rise of any disputed writing, we must have a firm point by which to fix it; and the prophetic movement, he adds, furnishes a number of such fixed points. It will be found, in fact, that the whole theory of the rise of the Deuteronomic and Priestly Codes at the periods to which they are respectively assigned, appeals for support in the last resource to the prophetic writings; and so indeed does the whole theory of the development of the history. For in the prophetic writings we have contemporary documents, which give us a direct knowledge of the times to which they belong. They enable us, therefore, to control the so-called historical compositions, and to say what is pre-prophetic and what prophetic, since the whole religious history was powerfully modified by prophetic influence.

Leaving out of view for the present the aids furnished by political events and considerations of general development, we seem, on the admission of the critical writers, to have obtained, in the writings of contemporary prophets, a sure standard by which to estimate the statements of the historical books, and to determine generally the course of the

¹ Wellhausen, *Hist. of Israel*, p. 13.

² *Geschichte*, i. p. 19.

historical development; and so, in the preceding chapters, we have appealed with confidence to the books of Hosea and Amos. Another complication of the matter, however, occurs here; for this fixed standard, it appears, is only to be accepted with reservation. The prophetic writings also, in becoming "canonical," have passed through vicissitudes similar to those of the historical books. This is what Stade has to say on the subject: ¹—

“We must, indeed, in using the prophetic literature, always keep before us the fact that the judgments found therein regarding historical persons and circumstances are passed from a party point of view. Since, however, we are able to survey the prophetic activity as a movement running in a straight line, and fully completed, the points of view are sufficiently known to us from which the treatment of the history was regarded by the prophets, and we are thus in a position to control and correct their judgments. Moreover, it is to be noted that a writer who does not set himself *ex professo*, to write history according to definite guiding principles, but only touches on historical matters by the way in the unfolding of his thoughts, will never allow his ideas to have such a moulding influence on the historical material as a historian who proceeds upon such principles. He will probably view persons and circumstances at an oblique visual angle, and, just for that reason, will not judge correctly. He will, however, hardly go so far as to draw generally the conclusions from his own ideas, and consequently will communicate sufficiently accurate details, by which we can correct those that are inaccurate.

“In the employment of the prophetic literature there is still a second point to be well noted, which is generally overlooked. The development of prophecy, whose literary products lie before us in the Old Testament, is only development in one straight line. But the development of human thought [as explained in connection with the historical writings] is not in the habit of moving

¹ *Geschichte*, i. p. 80 ff.

in this one-sided way. Then we have besides, in the prophetic writings of the Old Testament, sufficient indications pointing to the conclusion that the development of the Old Testament prophecy was once a much richer and more manifold thing. The false prophets who were combated by the authors of the prophetic writings that have come down to us, are representatives of divergent prophetic tendencies. They also wrote prophetic works. It is self-evident, however, that only the works of such prophets have been handed down as lie in the direction of the prophetic ideas which gained the victory and came to be universally received. One of the things that mainly determined this result was the circumstance whether or not the prophecies of a prophet had been fulfilled. From those prophets, who, in opposition to Jeremiah, prophesied the victory of the Judæan state over Babylon, not a single work, as a matter of course, has come down to us. When, however, it was a question of receiving or not receiving a prophetic piece into the canon, it was not always so simple a matter for a work to prove that it belonged to a certain mode of thought; and accordingly, just when the collection of the writings of the prophets was made, there must have taken place a very special and thorough overworking of the material handed down, with regard to the points of view explained already [in connection with the canonisation of historical writings], and by means of the expedients already described."

We cannot enter into all the questions here raised as to what happened to books in the process of canonisation. It is quite apparent that what is assumed to have taken place is something very different from the events incident in the ordinary transmission of ancient books. These sweeping assertions, however, are of no value unless supported by positive proof; and it could be shown that the graver portion of them is entirely destitute of historical foundation.¹ The struggle between opposing tendencies,

¹ See König's *Hauptprobleme*, pp. 12 ff., and his *Falsche Extreme*, p. 3.

so far as it did take place, lies before us quite patent in the Biblical writings; nor is there the shadow of proof that any attempt was made in these writings to suppress one side of it; and the genuineness of the writings before us is not to be settled by such *a priori* canons. But the thoughtful reader will ask at this point, Where now is the fixed standard of appeal? If prophetic writers wrote under a bias, which must be allowed for and corrected; if their writings have not come down to us in their original form, and require to be critically adjusted; or if the prophets even held erroneous views in regard to the national history, which have to be rectified,—who holds the infallible standard for determining all the grave and difficult questions which then arise? The answer will perhaps appear as we now proceed to observe the application of the critical canons to the two books of Hosea and Amos on which we have hitherto relied. We have already seen¹ that, by both these prophets, a certain pre-eminence is given to the house of David and the southern kingdom of Judah. The modern theory, however, maintains that it was at a much later time that this pre-eminence was assigned to Judah, and that in the early prophetic period the balance of power lay in the northern kingdom. Accordingly, Stade proceeds to strike out of Amos as “insertions” certain expressions (among others²) that are at variance with his theory. The most important in this connection are

¹ Chap. v. p. 111.

² Stade, *Geschichte*, i. p. 571, footnote. Besides the passage, ii. 4, 5, considered in the text, the other portions rejected by Stade are, iv. 13 (partly), v. 8 f., ix. 6. Reference will be made to these in another place.

the two verses 4 and 5 of chapter ii., containing the prophet's denunciation of the sin of Judah, "because they have despised the law of the Lord, and not kept His commandments." It may suit Stade and others to regard this as an "insertion," but it is important to observe that if the verses are omitted, there would be a singular incompleteness of the whole passage, chapters i., ii., in which Amos makes a survey of the neighbouring nations on every side, ending with Israel, to which he directly addressed his words. The omission altogether of Judah from the survey, therefore, would be unaccountable on the mere ground of literary form, to say nothing further in the meantime of the substance. The book of Hosea fares no better at the hands of the critics. It is part of their theory that those passages in the historical books which express disapproval of the monarchy, as inconsistent with the divinely organised theocracy, are due to the Deuteronomistic revision. Since, therefore, Hosea (more than a century before the discovery of the Deuteronomic Code) is found to speak in that sense, the passages must be removed. Stade says:¹ "Since this prophet's expectations of the future, owing to his peculiar representation of the monarchy, differed in cardinal points from the type of view of the future that came to prevail with Isaiah, an attempt has been made at a later time to get over the difficulty by the insertion of the missing details." Consequently we are told to strike out i. 7, ii. 1-3, which break the connection and disturb the order of thought; and also in iii. 5 we are to

¹ Geschichte, i. p. 577, footnote.

omit at least the words "and David their king," as well as iv. 15, viii. 14, which refer to Judah.¹ Wellhausen also perceives the difficulties that emerge here, and has a similar method of laying them. He confesses that Hosea "appears to have regarded the kingdom as such as an evil; in more than one expression he makes it the antithesis of the rule of Jehovah."² And having given what he considers the explanation of this, he says in a footnote: "He even speaks with favour of David and the kingdom of Judah, but I consider all such references in Hosea (as well as in Amos) to be interpolations. In i. 7 there is a reference to the deliverance of Jerusalem under Hezekiah."

The process of "striking out," however, does not meet the whole difficulty. The teaching of Hosea and Amos on important points is so ingrained in the whole books that it cannot be evaded. Accordingly, another line of explanation has to be followed. Stade says:³ "Hosea is the first who conceives the whole of the past from the point of view of a de-

¹ The passages in question are these:—

Hosea i. 7: "But I will have mercy on the house of Judah, and will save them by the Lord their God, and will not save them by bow, nor by sword, nor by battle, nor by horses, nor by horsemen."

ii. 1-3 (viz., in A. V. i. 10 f.): "Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured nor numbered: and it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people, there it shall be said unto them, Ye are the sons of the living God. Then shall the children of Judah and the children of Israel be gathered together, and appoint themselves one head, and they shall come up out of the land: for great shall be the day of Jezreel. Say unto your brethren, Ammi; and to your sisters, Ruhamah."

iii. 5: "Afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek the Lord their God, and David their king; and shall fear the Lord and His goodness in the latter day."

iv. 15: "Though thou, Israel, play the harlot, yet let not Judah offend."

viii. 14: "For Israel hath forgotten his Maker, and buildeth temples; and Judah hath multiplied fenced cities."

² Hist. of Israel, p. 417.

³ Geschichte, i. p. 582.

clension (*Abfall*), and his opinion in regard to the monarchy is but a part of this general view. And just as his ideas of the intercourse of Israel with foreign nations had, along with other things, a material influence on the later Jewish ideas regarding the heathen, so also his use of the argument from history, in order to prove to the people their deviation from the requirements of Jehovah and their declension, prepared the way for the unhistorical view that came to be taken of the past, and the treatment of it in the light of later religious conceptions. That view, which took Israel's history as a sacred history under a process of throwing a light of its own on the actual circumstances, did not indeed take its beginning from him, but received from him its strongest impulse."¹

The position in which we are now placed is this. The modern historians have refused to call the books of the Pentateuch as evidence; they have eliminated those "summaries" of the history which are overlaid on the historical books; they triumphantly appeal to contemporary witnesses; and we have accepted them. And then, when their own witnesses step into the box, and are expected to bless the modern theory, they curse it altogether. And this by no forced cross-examination on the part of those who were to be confuted by them, but by spontaneous straightforward statements; and forthwith those who called them proceed to tell us that the

¹ Stade is not by any means alone in discrediting the views of the prophets. Smend, in an article in 'Studien und Kritiken' for 1876 on the stage of development in the Israelite religion presupposed by the prophets of the eighth century, speaks in a similar strain. He is criticised by König, *Offenbarungsbegriff*, vol. I. p. 23 f.

evidence is to be taken with reservation. For later additions have been made to the testimony, and these must be removed before we can get the true statement of the case. Nay, these prophets themselves, even when we get at their own words, are not to be relied on for matters of fact when they tell us that other teachers taught the same truth before them, nor for their statements of history when they declare that their nation had been taught a better religion and had declined from it. The question again recurs, Where now is the fixed point and firm standard by which we are to reach the truth? The historical books are to be corrected by the aid of the prophetic; but where is the standard for correcting the prophetic books? On what authority are these "insertions" to be removed; by what guide are we to adjust the prophetic misapprehensions? The only "fixed" thing perceivable is the theory itself; the only standard is "strike out" or "I consider." For the rest, what may be called by admirers a delicate process of criticism may appear to others uncommonly like a piece of literary thimblerrigging. You come upon the critic suddenly when he professes to be engaged in one of those delicate processes of criticism, and you find him slipping his subjective scale up his sleeve. The passages which disturb a pet theory are declared to disturb the connection. We have, in fact, *no* contemporary reliable documents till the critic has adjusted them; and the theory ultimately is appealed to in confirmation of itself.

Looking to the assumptions made by Stade as to

what has happened to historical and prophetic books before and during canonisation, the difficulty of getting beneath the documents to the precise facts of the history will appear to most minds stupendous; and looking to the absence of fixity in the standard of judgment, one cannot help wondering at, if not admiring, the confidence with which critics set to work on the task. One,¹ for example, tells us that "it is not needful in starting to lay down any fixed rules of procedure. The ordinary laws of evidence and good sense must be our guides. And these we must apply to the Bible just as we should do to any other ancient book. That is the only principle we have to lay down. And it is plainly a just principle." So undoubtedly it is, if only all were agreed as to what "the ordinary laws of evidence and good sense" amount to. Another,² of a more daring temperament, after giving his own sketch of a part of the history, which differs *toto cælo* from that of the Biblical books, says, "The sketch which we have given can be extracted from our sources without too much trouble. In order to disengage the encumbrances (*surcharges*) which the theological point of view of the redactor has introduced into them, all that is wanted (*il suffit*) is a little practice and some decision." Some! Critics, indeed, profess to proceed upon a principle which, properly taken, is the basis of historical inquiry—viz., "that every book bears the stamp of the time and circumstances in which it was produced."³ But in the exercise of

¹ Robertson Smith, *the Old Testament in the Jewish Church*, Lect. I. p. 25.

² Maurice Vernes, *Resultats*, p. 26.

³ *Old Testament in Jewish Church*, Lect. I. p. 23.

this principle many of them set to work after the manner of a schoolboy, who, finding that his new knife can cut a stick, employs it in barking fruit-trees and hacking furniture. In order to determine an author's time, expressions will be seized upon which might refer to any time; or, his time being determined, his position in it and even his relation to it will be circumscribed by our meagre knowledge of what the time and circumstances were. The most lofty poetry may be degraded into the dullest prose; critics, "unable to follow prophecy in its flight, clip its wings;"¹ and because, forsooth, a prophet is to be regarded as speaking to his own age, he must not be allowed to see anything beyond it. Properly speaking, the first principle of criticism is that every book bears the stamp of the man that produced it; and it is from the book that we are to know the man. It is not legitimate to determine beforehand both his time and his circumstances, and then to interpret the whole book in the light of the position we have assigned to the writer. It is no doubt true that every man belongs to his age, and is to a certain extent a product of it. But are there not men who mould their age? Are there not men in advance of their age? Are not the *circumstances* under which an author writes partly the influences of a past time, and partly also the adumbrations of a coming time? In a word, to tie a writer down to the circumstances and surroundings of his day is utterly unscientific and opposed to experience. To treat Hebrew

¹ So Delitzsch speaks of men of the type of Grotius, a type not by any means extinct.—Comm. on Isaiah, last Eng. ed., vol. i. p. 41.

prophets, of all men, in this way, is simply to lay down an insurmountable barrier to our understanding them.

Of the critical pretension to be able to determine dates of passages by occult references, we have just seen an example in Wellhausen's confident assertion that Hosea i. 7 must be as late as the time of Hezekiah. It is an example as good as many of those with which his pages are thickly strewn. Different readers will estimate differently the ability which they display. I confess that many of them do not, to my mind, exhibit even "such a display of ingenuity as makes people clap their hands and cry *well done!* but does not seriously persuade them."¹ If they were merely the occasional coruscations of the critical wit, serving to enliven the dull pages, they might be borne with. But they are, in fact, advanced with a gravity which at times makes the reader doubt his own sanity, and given forth as the results of critical science, out of which a new history is to be constructed.

We come back, however, to the essential point. The key of the position is the view that is taken of the teaching of the prophets; and at this point the two theories are quite opposed. The Biblical theory represents the prophets as continuators, reformers, recalling their people to a standard of religion from which they had fallen. The modern critical historians place a wide gulf between the pre-prophetic and the prophetic religion, the general position

¹ Matthew Arnold, *God and the Bible*, chap. v. § 1. The whole section is well worth reading in our connection.

being that the pre-prophetic religion of Israel differed little, if in anything, from the religion of the nations who lived round about Israel. "The religion of David and Solomon," says Renan,¹ "did not differ appreciably from that of the neighbouring peoples of Palestine." Jahaveh, as others put it, was to the Israelites very much what Chemosh and Moloch were to the Moabites and Ammonites.² So far from appearing among the Canaanites with distinctive religious beliefs and customs, they resembled them in all essential points, settled quietly among them in many or in most cases, and finding their ideas conform to their own, adopted their sacred places, attaching to them stories of their own tribal heroes, but observing the religious customs and worship of their neighbours.

This is what Stade says:³—

"That the religion of Israel, from being a nature religion, became a religion of the spirit; that such a religion arose in the ancient world is, in the first place, the merit of the prophetic movement, and in the second place, the result of the political fortunes of the people. The prophetic movement had to wage violent conflicts with the popular religion."

And Wellhausen,⁴ after remarking that the prophets, who first appeared as a novel phenomenon some time before the beginning of the Philistine war, had in the interval (ending with Ahab) become so naturalised that they had a recognised and essential place in connection with the religion of Jehovah, goes on to say:—

¹ Pref. to second vol. of *Histoire d'Israel*, p. ii.

² Stade, *Geschichte*, i, p. 429.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

⁴ *Hist. of Israel*, p. 461.

“First-rate importance on the whole cannot be claimed for the Nebiim, but occasionally there arose amongst them a man in whom the spirit which was cultivated within their circles may be said to have risen to the explosive pitch;” and “the prototype of this class of exceptional prophets, whom we not unjustly have been accustomed to regard as the true, is Elijah of Thisbe, the contemporary of Ahab. To him first,” Wellhausen proceeds,¹ “was it revealed that we have not, in the various departments of nature, a variety of forces worthy of our worship, but that there exists over all but one Holy One and one Mighty One, who reveals Himself not in nature, but in law and righteousness in the world of man.”

Passing on to Amos, we are told²—

“Amos was the founder and the purest type of a new phase of prophecy. The impending conflict of Asshur with Jehovah and Israel, the ultimate downfall of Israel, is its theme.”

Again:³—

“The canonical prophets, the series of whom begins with Amos, were separated by an essential distinction from the class which had preceded them, and which still continued to be the type of the common prophet. They did not seek to kindle either the enthusiasm or the fanaticism of the multitude; they swam not with but against the stream. They were not patriotic, at least in the ordinary sense of the word; they prophesied not good but evil for their people (Jer. xxviii. 8). Until their time the nation had sprung up out of the conception of Jehovah; now the conception of Jehovah was casting the nation into the shade. The natural bond between the two was severed, and the relation was henceforward viewed as conditional. As God of the righteousness which is the law of the whole universe, Jehovah could be Israel's God only in so far as in Israel the right was recognised and followed. The ethical element destroyed the national character of the old religion. It still addressed itself, to be sure, more to the nation and to society at large than to the indi-

¹ Hist. of Israel, p. 462.

² Ibid., p. 472.

³ Ibid., p. 473.

vidual; it insisted less upon a pure heart than upon righteous institutions; but nevertheless the first step towards universalism had been accomplished, towards at once the general diffusion and the individualisation of religion. Thus, although the prophets were far from originating a new conception of God, they none the less were the founders of what has been called 'ethical monotheism.' But with them this ethical monotheism was no product of the 'self-evolution of dogma,' but a progressive step which had been called forth simply by the course of events."

We shall have occasion to consider at length in the sequel the various positions here assumed. In the meantime particular attention must be called to this iteration of "Amos was the first to" say this or that, "Hosea first perceived" this and the other thing, or "to Elijah was first revealed" something else. So Wellhausen says in another connection:¹ "It was Amos, Hosea, and Isaiah who introduced the movement against the old popular worship of the high places; in doing so they are not in the least actuated by a deep-rooted preference for the temple of Jerusalem, but by ethical motives, which manifest themselves in them for the first time in history, and which we can see springing up in them before our very eyes." If these statements are allowed to go unchallenged, they amount to practically the begging of the whole question—for the very thing we want to prove is whether or not there was antecedent teaching such as that of these men. But the statements are utterly unwarranted by any facts at our disposal.

It would be a hazardous thing to say of any writer

¹ *Hist. of Israel*, p. 47.

in whose works we first come upon the enunciation of a truth, that he was the very first to grasp it. And in regard to Amos and Hosea all that we can admit in the meantime is, that these are the two who furnish us the earliest undisputed contemporary writings. But even if they are the *first* to hold the views ascribed to them, is it necessary to conclude that they were mistaken when they refer to the historical development of the religion? This is the view we have seen Stade takes of Hosea—viz., that he was wrong in declaring that Israel had declined from the true religion; and that he thus prepared the way for the unhistorical theocratic view which came to prevail. And yet is not this just one of the points on which we ought to take the true prophet to be a safe guide and a skilful interpreter? The polemic of the prophets, says Wellhausen,¹ “is a purely prophetic one—*i.e.*, individual, ‘theopneust,’ in the sense that it is independent of all traditional and preconceived human opinions;” and Robertson Smith² says, “The possession of a single thought about Jehovah, not derived from current religious teaching, but springing up in a soul as a word from Jehovah Himself, is enough to constitute a prophet, and lay on him the duty of speaking to Israel what he has learned of Israel’s God.” Now it is undoubted that to the prophets Israel’s God was closely connected with Israel’s national life; it was “God in history,” not God in His essence, that was the subject of their study, the theme of their teaching. And if, on their own proper theme, in their own

¹ Hist. of Israel, p. 48.

² Prophets, p. 182.

prophetic sphere, they are wrong, in what respect, we may ask, are they true prophets at all?

Supposing still, however, that these prophets "were the first" to teach as they did, let us consider the situation that arises. What we would have to believe is that, whereas, as Wellhausen¹ expresses the matter, the nation had up to the time of Hosea been the ideal of the religion in actual realisation, and the people at large had no feeling that they were doing anything inconsistent with the principles of the national religion, this prophet now confronted them with a new ideal, and taught them that their present religious position was a declension from an earlier one. Now it is conceivable that a view taken up by Hosea or Amos might afterwards become the basis of an unhistorical conception; it is conceivable that Hosea or Amos may have given hints of past events or personages that were afterwards expanded into so-called history. But I doubt very much whether the ideas of a whole generation as to its own past history are thus produced by the *new* teaching of one or two men. For if the view originated with Hosea, and gained acceptance straight-way on his word, we have to suppose that this one man not only introduced a new conception of the whole of the past history, but obliterated from the consciousness another conception of it which had previously existed. If language has any meaning at all, the hearers of Hosea were at one with him as regards the facts of the history and their significance, however degenerate they were in practice.

¹ Hist. of Israel, p. 491.

In the line of prophets that follow Hosea, we see no indication of the gradual acceptance of his view, which must have taken place if it was new. His view is that of all the prophets. The position, in fact, is entirely forced and unnatural, and shows simply the shifts to which one is reduced in pushing his theory through at all hazards. Moreover, we are not so anxious in the meantime to know the influence of Hosea's views on succeeding times, as to know the origin of Hosea's own views; and as to this, the vital point, we get no information. Modern writers demand development; but we have now found and shall always find that when it comes to a vital point like this, their development breaks down: whereas the Biblical writers set before us a development which, at all events, in this case is comprehensible, and, taken in connection with the explicit declarations of the prophets before us, answers the conditions of the present problem. For it is to be observed that Hosea does not deal in generalities in stating his view. It might have been supposed that, like other moralists, he was a *laudator temporis acti*, and being of a melancholy spirit, dwelt on the "good old times" that were gone. But this is not the case. He does indeed speak of the early love of Jahaveh's bride for her Husband, and he does blame the people of his age for falling very low; but he lays his finger on certain positive sins in their past history, and indicates definite places in which their sin had been most flagrant¹—a proof that he was not talking at large or inventing past history—

¹ See Hosea iv. 15 ff.; ix. 10, 15; x. 5; xiii. 1.

a proof that the conscience of the nation could not gainsay what was laid to its charge.

And now, before examining in detail the fundamental points in dispute, let us eliminate the elements of the problem in regard to which there is no controversy.

1. In the first place, it is not denied that the prophets waged war against the popular religion and worship. The prophets themselves tell us so, and the historical books no less distinctly. The question simply is, Was the popular religion with which they were in conflict the only accepted and recognised religion of the nation up to their time, or was it a declension from it and perversion of it? The modern school leaves it to be inferred that it was the religion of Mosaism; and Duhm seems to say as much when he declares¹ that the prophetic consciousness was at variance with the Jahaveh religion as it was represented at the Temple of Solomon; and Wellhausen also, when he says:² "In old times the nation had been the ideal of religion in actual realisation: the prophets confronted the nation with an ideal to which it did not correspond." So far as the attitude of the prophets to the mere externals of religion is concerned, we shall have to speak at length by-and-by. In the meantime, we insist upon the recognition of a religion altogether distinct from the popular conceptions and the popular abuses which the prophets condemned. And the more sober-minded writers of the critical school do not deny this. Reuss, for example, says:³ "We

¹ Theol. d. Propheten, p. 10 ff. Cf. p. 53.

² Hist. of Israel, p. 491.

³ Geschichte, p. 316.

are persuaded that the essential elements of the collective view of the prophets are older than our oldest witnesses." So Smend says:¹ "Clearly there were fundamental views of religion which the people had in common with the prophets." It is difficult to understand how any other view of the matter could be entertained in the face of the two facts, (1) that the prophets themselves ever appeal to the conscience of the people in attestation of the truths which they deliver; and (2) that the people in Elijah's days, for example, should have recognised the force of the appeal so readily and universally, and acted upon it so energetically. From the beginning to the end there cannot be found a passage in which a prophet speaks as if he were uttering a new or strange truth, and there are many expressions plainly implying that they were simply enforcing what they and their hearers accepted as undisputed and indisputable. This is a feature of the prophetic teaching to which the modern theory does not give sufficient weight. It is quite characteristic. If we compare, for example, the claims of Mohammed on the attention of his countrymen, we find that he indeed appeals to antecedent teachers who had taught the same truth, but he insists upon it that *now*, in his person, there was a special promulgation of the truth to the people of Arabia. Nay, the Gospel itself claims to rest upon Old Testament revelation; yet the Founder of Christianity spoke with authority, setting his "I say unto you" over against the commands of the men of old time; and St. Paul

¹ Theol. Stud. u. Krit., 1876, pp. 599-664.

contrasts the time of Gospel revelation with the antecedent times of ignorance. The Old Testament prophets, however, give us no hint that they have got a clearer or more precise message to their times than had been given of old time. On the contrary, they describe their own times as degenerate and apostate, and no one dares to contradict them. The consensus of the whole "goodly fellowship" of the prophets on this point should not be lightly passed over.

As to the existence of an ideal religion side by side with an actual one, the experience of the world has proved but too clearly that the practices of a people, or their ordinary conceptions in any given epoch, are not to be confounded with the principles of the faith which they profess. Religious belief and religious practice, indeed, so react upon one another, and practice, as experience shows, is so strong, that it would be vain to search for a people at any time exhibiting a *pure* faith in the proper sense of the expression. We need not expect to find in ancient Israel a faith untarnished by superstition or free from the limitations of ignorance. It is both unscientific and unscriptural to look in the Old Testament for either a theology or a religious life which was *semper, ubique, et ab omnibus*. But it is surely easy enough to distinguish between hindrances or corruptions and purity of germ. What the prophets themselves plainly represent is, that there had been made known to their people of old time a better faith and a purer worship than those of the heathen nations, or of their own degen-

erate people; and in testimony of this, they think it sufficient to appeal to the consciences of their hearers.¹

At the same time, we must recognise to the full what was the actual condition of the popular religion. The Biblical writers do not conceal this from us, but prophet and historian alike dwell upon it as evidence of the national defection. In the first place, they admit that the ancestors of Israel were idol-worshippers, when they say that the fathers of the patriarchs "beyond the river" Euphrates served other gods, and claim for Abraham a special knowledge of the true God. Then history and experience alike go to show that the sojourn in Egypt had a deteriorating influence on the old patriarchal faith, and finally, the position of the people in the midst of the idolatrous nations of Canaan and surrounding lands is ever to be kept in view in estimating the complex product of religious life at the time at which we have undoubted contemporary accounts. When we remember how long it takes for pure religious conceptions to work themselves into the practical recognition of a nation, how isolated Israel was in its days of independence among surrounding nations, and above all, how much tendency there is in human nature—as witness the course of ecclesiastical history—by the imperfection of language for one thing, and by the infirmity of human nature above all, to run down to practical heathenism; and how superstitious ideas and superstitious practices sur-

¹ Cf. also Micah vi. 4, Jer. vii. 25, Isa. lxiii. 11, Mal. iv. 4. Cf. König, *Offenbarungsbegriff des Alten Testaments*, vol. 1. p. 57.

vive even when there is no external inciting motive, —we need not wonder at the low ideas which prevailed among the common people in the days of Amos and Hosea and much later, or at the tenacity with which superstition kept its hold long after the purest-minded of the prophets had delivered their message. The thing we do wonder at is, how a succession of prophets kept so far above the level of the ordinary conceptions, and the wonder does not cease but takes a new phase when we come back to the only true explanation—viz., that this nation, so perverse and yet so highly favoured, had been at an earlier time the recipient of a higher truth, up to whose level the best of the nation strove to keep their contemporaries.

2. Nor need it be disputed that there was an advance in the prophets' own conceptions of religion. In maintaining that there was a national religion made known to Israel and preserved by the prophets, apart from the mere popular conceptions, we are not to be held as maintaining that some complete scheme of theology was in their hands, from which there was no possibility of advance. The writings of the prophets are before us to refute such an idea, should it be entertained. The days are past when it was thought admissible, in arguing a theological point, to cite texts promiscuously from any of the books of Scripture, because all were inspired; and to handle the Bible as if it were a code or encyclopædia of theological doctrines. Nor need we expect the religion taught by the prophets to be a philosophical or theological system. The truth which the prophets

taught was in themselves a germinating influence, and whether by the events occurring on the political stage, or by their own God-guided reflections, or by the condition of the men among whom they lived and moved, they rose from a lower to a higher stage of spiritual perception. The works of the writing prophets which lie before us show a variety in each writer's conception of Jahaveh's character and of His relation to Israel and the world at large. Amos dwells particularly on the attribute of righteousness; Hosea's favourite mode of viewing God is from the side of love; while Isaiah represents Him as the exalted one, the sovereign ruler. But we are never safe in making any individual writer the exponent of any single conception—as many are inclined to do. The various views of the prophets are not so much stages in an orderly progression, as different aspects of one truth which, from personal temperament or from the nature of his surroundings, each prophet was led to emphasise, although each one gives indications more or less explicit that other aspects of it are not ignored by him. We may not indeed observe a strict advance from attribute to attribute in the case of each succeeding writer, yet there is on the whole an advance in the one grand conception as the periods succeed one another, till at a certain late stage we can note a marked difference as compared with the earlier. The ideas of Jeremiah and Ezekiel, for example, are a clear advance upon the more general truths taught by Amos; but there is no inconsistency between them—there is simply the advance in spiritual perception. Later prophets

have a wider idea of the world, but they have the same idea of the relation of God to it. To the mind of all the prophets and Old Testament writers, the nation is the unit of organisation and life. Even the new covenant of Jeremiah is made with the people; though it operates first upon individuals, it is in order to gather them into a people."¹ What is maintained is, that the point from which the very earliest prophets start is not the low platform of nature religion, or even the narrow ground of simple national religion, but one infinitely higher, and one reached by an antecedent development which the modern school will insist on placing farther down in history—in other words, that from the first the idea is moral or ethical and not naturalistic. That the prophets should have attained purer and more spiritual conceptions of Jahaveh as time went on and events taught them, it is but reasonable to suppose; though here, as elsewhere, we must beware of putting that first in order of time which appears most elementary in conception: for all prophets had not the same insight; and it might be given to one at a comparatively early period to catch glimpses of a truth which men of a succeeding age hardly perceived. The post-exilian prophets, for example, do not seem on the whole to have ever reached the height attained by Isaiah and Jeremiah, although they enjoyed the advantage of having their prophecies to instruct them. Even the prophecies of Balaam are in one respect more advanced than those of the second half of the book of Isaiah: for in the latter

¹ A. B. Davidson, in *Expositor*, third series, vol. v. p. 177.

there is a constant polemic against the gods of the heathen, whereas in the former the unique character of Jahaveh is boldly asserted. It was by political events and the fate of the nation generally that the best spirits were educated into more spiritual truths, and the progress of the evolution or revelation of divine truth was controlled, as always, by providential circumstances; but the truth to be developed was already there.

These two points being admitted, however, there still remains for the new theory the difficulty of explaining the prophetic ideas apart from an antecedent revelation of them to the nation. The modern historians, in their negation of a pure *pre-prophetic* religion, are ever faced with the task of explaining the rise of pure *prophetic* religion. They do not allow themselves a sufficient starting-point for the development; for the prophetic religion, when we meet it, is not of a germinal or elementary character. They are forced to make sudden transitions and assume such extraordinary changes, as invest the theory with difficulties much greater than those attending the Biblical view.

I confess that it is extremely difficult for me, not only to believe the position that is taken up, but even to apprehend it as a possibility. That Israel, with nothing distinctively peculiar to start with beyond the bare belief that Jahaveh was their only national God, should have adopted and absorbed elements the most diverse, and still have remained Israel; that the elements absorbed should have been the most distinctively heathenish and low, and yet

that the result of it all was not an eclecticism, but a product *sui generis*; and that all the time this transmutation was going on, a body of men, whose official basis rested on heathenism, should have lashed their countrymen with invective and threatening for forsaking the religion of their fathers,—all this is to me as great a psychological and moral miracle as any of the miracles recorded in Scripture. Before we can accept it as a true account of Israel's religious development, we must be satisfied on three points.

First, It must be shown by clear proofs that before the time of the writing prophets the religious beliefs and observances of Israel were on the same level as those of their neighbours, and that this state of things was accepted by the enlightened men of the time as the normal and authorised religion.

Second, Some differentiating element must be pointed out sufficient to explain the fact that Israel remained Israel all this time. In other words, a national religion sufficient to mark off the people as a nation must be exhibited.

Third, The process of development must be pointed out in the historical stadia, through which, from the rudimentary stage, Israel arrived at the "ethic monotheism" of the prophets.

The chapters that follow will be devoted to a consideration of these points. In chapters vii. to x. the main points relied upon to prove the low tone of pre-prophetic religion will be discussed. Chapter xi. will treat of the Jahaveh religion; and in chapter xii. we shall consider in what way it is alleged

the pre-prophetic passed into the prophetic, and Israel arrived at the ethic monotheism of the prophets.

CHAPTER VII.

PRE-PROPHETIC RELIGION—NAMING OF THE DEITY.

Statement of the critical position as to the low tone of the pre-prophetic religion, and various lines of proof indicated—Subject of the present chapter: Consideration of the argument drawn from the names of Deity—It is argued from the free use of the name of Baal in the formation of proper names, that the persons so employing it had no aversion to the Baal worship—Argument examined: Baal as a common appellative name—Condition of Israel in Canaan described—Parallel cases of syncretism at the present day—No case can be cited of undoubted names of heathen deities being so used—The argument drawn from the correspondence of Hebrew names with those of Babylonian deities—The argument proves too much, and the mode of bestowing names is different from the usual Hebrew custom—This whole mode of reasoning proceeds on a false system of mythologising, and fails to furnish the historical proof which is wanted.

THAT the religion of Israel before the time of the writing prophets was on the level of the religions of neighbouring peoples, and that these prophets first taught the truth of monotheism, are positions so confidently asserted in modern times that the ordinary reader is apt to take them as truths that cannot be disputed. Thus Pfeleiderer says¹ it may

¹ Die Geschichte der Religion (1869), p. 273.

be taken as tolerably certain that the Hebrews in their prehistoric period participated in the polytheistic nature-religion of the rest of the Semites. And with more definiteness of detail, and indicating more precisely what period of time is referred to, Kuenen says:¹ “At first the religion of Israel was *polytheism*. During the eighth century B.C. the great majority of the people still acknowledged the existence of many gods, and, what is more, they worshipped them. And we can add that during the seventh century, and down to the beginning of the Babylonish exile (586 B.C.), this state of things remained unaltered. Jeremiah could say to his contemporaries, without fear of contradiction, ‘According to the number of thy cities are thy gods, O Judah’ (Jer. xi. 13; ii. 28). This polytheism of the mass of the people cannot be regarded as a subsequent innovation; on the contrary, everything is in favour of its originality. In the accounts of the preceding centuries we never seek for it in vain. But—and this is decisive—the prophets’ conception of Jahveh’s being and of His relation to Israel is inexplicable, unless the God whom they now acknowledge to be the only one was at first only one of many gods. The relation in which Jahveh stands to Israel is the same as, for instance, that of Chemosh to the Moabites; Jahveh would never have become Israel’s special property, as it were, and would never have come to dwell exclusively in Canaan, if he had been held from the beginning to be the only true God. That limitation is, on the

¹ Religion of Israel, (Eng. tr.), vol. i. p. 223 f.

contrary, extremely natural, if he was originally Israel's tribal God, who, as such, had many other gods beside him."

The proofs which are adduced in support of this position are many and various. It is maintained, for example, that the Israelites spoke of their God in the same way as their neighbours spoke of their gods, and even applied to Him the names of Gentile deities, or regarded those deities as possessing similar powers and attributes; that they regarded Him as limited to one place or certain places, and powerful only or chiefly in His own territory; that they thought it not derogatory to His dignity to make visible representations of their deity; that moral qualities were not prominent, or even essential, in the conception of His character; or even, as some critics maintain, that they considered it a religious duty to offer to Him human sacrifices.

All these points are held to be capable of proof from the writings to which we have restricted ourselves, and, as features of the religion of Israel, they are maintained to be distinctly visible in the period of which we have undoubted historic knowledge. Not only so; but it is asserted also that we have conclusive proof that these religious beliefs rest upon and grow naturally out of a more primitive stage of religious culture, the lower condition of animism or fetishism which characterises the most savage peoples. Says Kuenen:¹ "To what one might call the universal, or at least the common rule, that religion begins with fetishism, then de-

¹ Religion of Israel (Eng. tr.), vol. i. p. 225.

velops into polytheism, and then, but not before, ascends to monotheism—that is to say, if this highest stage be reached—to this rule the Semites are no exception;” and Stade proceeds elaborately to prove that, in the documents before us, we have clear indications of the survival of these primitive conceptions and beliefs to historic times.

To the proofs brought forward in support of these positions, we must therefore now turn our attention; and in this chapter we consider primarily the argument based upon the Hebrew mode of naming the Deity.

We have to consider, first of all, the argument drawn from the free use of the name of Baal in forming proper names, even in the families of the most pious Israelites. Thus Tiele:¹ “Even so zealous representatives of Jahvism as Saul and David named their children after Baal. Solomon, who built a magnificent temple to Jehovah, saw in that no hindrance to his erecting sanctuaries also for other gods, which, by later writers, was indeed imputed to him as a sin, but not by his own contemporaries. The Baal whom the prophet Elijah in the northern kingdom so vigorously contended against was not the native Baal, but the Phœnician, whom the Sidonian princess Jezebel, Ahab’s wife, had introduced. His pupil Elisha and his adherent Jehu rooted out this foreign cultus with violence, but they did not interfere with the cultus of the native Ashera.”

Now it is a well-known fact that the Israelites, like other Semitic nations, used the name of Deity

¹ *Kompendium der Religionsgeschichte*, § 53.

to a large extent in the formation of personal proper names. Names compounded with El, like Israel, and with parts of Jahaveh, like Jehoram, are the commonest in the language of nomenclature; and it cannot be disputed that the word Baal is thus found in compound proper names, and *that*, too, in the families of persons most distinguished for their reverence for the national God of the Hebrews. In the genealogical lists of Chronicles, we find a son of Saul named Eshbaal (1 Chron. viii. 33; ix. 39) called Ishbosheth in 2 Sam. ii. 8, and a son of David named Beeliada (1 Chron. xiv. 7). We have even such a combination as Bealiah (Baal is Jah) (1 Chron. xii. 5) as the name of one of David's adherents at Ziklag. Moreover, there is the well-known passage in Hosea (ii. 16, 17), "And it shall be at that day, saith the Lord, that thou shalt call me Ishi [my husband], and shalt call me no more Baali [my master]. For I will take away the names of the Baalim out of her mouth, and they shall no more be mentioned [or remembered] by their name." Here, then, is plain proof, not only that the name Baal was used in the formation of proper names without any sense of impropriety attaching to it, but that the Israelites of the northern kingdom, even up to Hosea's days, called their national God their Baal. It does not, however, follow that they identified their national God with the Baal of the surrounding Canaanites in the attributes they ascribed to him, much less that the pious parents who gave such names to their children named them purposely after the Baal of the Phœnicians or Canaanites.

To make this clear, it is necessary to remember that the word *baal* was a common noun among the Hebrews, a part of the language which they had in common with other Semitic races. It is not a question here of going back to the original meaning of a word, and basing an argument upon some old application of it, or on the supposed primary signification—a process of reasoning which sometimes leads to great confusion.¹ In the language as spoken at the time to which the passages cited refer, and as a common word in the language, we find *baal*, in the sense of lord or master (spelled, as we should say, with a small *b*). In Exod. xxi., in the so-called “Book of the Covenant,” we find it used in both the senses of husband of a wife² and owner of an ox.³ In the same way the verb *baal*, in the sense of to rule over, be master of, is found in use in the language down to the time of Isaiah, who employs it in the verse, “other lords besides thee have had dominion over us” (Isa. xxvi. 13), and even as late as the time when the books of Chronicles were written.⁴ To put it otherwise, there is no reason to suppose that the Hebrews first used the word *baal* after they came into Canaan and became acquainted with the Baal worship practised there. Like the other word *adon*, which also means lord, it was a general appellative name. The wife called her husband *baali* (my lord), and the slave called his owner by the

¹ See Note XIV.

² “If he is baal of a wife, his wife shall go out with him” (v. 3).

³ “If an ox gore a man, &c., the baal of the ox shall be quit” (v. 28; cf. v. 29).

⁴ See 1 Chron. iv. 12. “who had the dominion in Moab.”

same name. And if a pious Israelite had been asked who was the god whom he and his family or nation revered, there could have been to him no impropriety in saying that his Baal or his Adon (*i.e.*, his Lord, with a capital letter) was Jahaveh. The suffix in the passage in Hosea shows that the word was used in this appellative sense. So when an Israelite said, "Jahaveh is our Elohim," he was employing the word Elohim which denoted the gods of the nations, a plural word which *may* have had its origin among a polytheistic people; but we cannot conclude from such phraseology that he put Jahaveh on the level of the gods of the nations, for the expression, when it occurs, generally denotes the very reverse.¹ But the circumstances to which Hosea refers show where the danger lay, and how it actually emerged. The Canaanites, having the same word in their language, with that mythological tendency to which all language is liable, had, so to speak, come to write Baal with a capital letter. It was the only name they had for their god, or, at all events, they used it and Adon as proper names, and hence the origin of the mythological Baal and Adonis. Moreover, not having attained, or not having held fast to, the idea of one god, they made "lords many," so that there was a lord (*baal* or *adon*) of this or that quality or place; the lordship of one became a host of Baalim. So long as Israel was not involved in this system—and the very fact of the free use of the word *baal* as an appellative at the time when they were confessedly professors of

¹ See Note XV.

the Jahaveh religion, is proof to me that the idolatrous use was of gradual and later growth—they might use the word *baal* in the old sense, because it connoted nothing inconsistent with their ancestral religion. Not only Hosea, however, but the historians of Israel as well, tell us only too plainly how, in the northern kingdom, there took place a mingling of impure elements with the old Jahaveh religion. From a simple naming of shrines as they were named among the Canaanites, their lips and ears became familiarised first with the religious nomenclature, and then with the religious conceptions of their neighbours. The Baal of this place had, we may suppose, the reputation of curing this disease, and the Baal of that of giving good harvests, and so on; just as the Virgin of certain places and the local saints have at the present day. Little by little, through their children associating with those of the Canaanites, through the servants and labourers, who belonged to the soil, through the atmosphere, as we say, the Israelites conformed to the polytheistic ideas. Among the mass of the people, if an actual syncretism did not take place, the sharp distinction between Jahaveh and Baal was dulled and blunted, and thus came about the situation so graphically painted by Hosea, when the corn and wine and oil were ascribed to the goodness of the *baalim*,¹ and the people were in danger of forgetting that Jahaveh who was the God of their nation was one lord. Any one who has lived in

¹ The association by Hosea of religious declension with material prosperity should not be overlooked. In the same way in the book of Judges, periods of *rest* always precede times of subjection. This is the philosophy of history which is common to all the Old Testament writers.

foreign countries knows how insidiously, through daily use of language and common associations of life, one comes to think somewhat as the natives, and, employing their language, to give inadvertently a tacit recognition to their beliefs. And the case we have supposed has its actual parallel, so far as the use of a name with different connotations goes. The Mohammedans give God the name of *Allah*. It is the common Arabic name for God; and the Arabic-speaking Christians who live side by side with them use the same name. But a Mohammedan who knows his Koran, and a Christian who knows his New Testament, attach very different ideas to the common name which they employ; and though both are monotheists, no doubt each has some confused notion that the God whom he worships is actually a different being from the deity of the other. Yet in outlying places in Syria, where education is not known, a practical syncretism takes place, so that though the Muslims and Christians recognise themselves as such respectively, they can give very little account of the distinction that separates them, and pay in common a superstitious reverence to the same localities or sacred objects.¹ It is not difficult to conceive how such a syncretism should have occurred in the northern kingdom, on the account

¹ Some years ago I met at Jerusalem a young Syrian Christian who had been sent by the Bishop of Jerusalem (Bishop Gobat) as an evangelist to Es-Salt (Ramoth-Gilead). He found Muslims and Christians living side by side engaged in the tillage of the soil, each sect recognising themselves as adherents of their ancestral religion, but unable to explain the difference subsisting between them, except in certain formal expressions or observances. "Are you a Christian?" he would say to one, and the answer was, "I am." "What is your faith?" "In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost." "Are you a Muslim?" another was asked, and he could repeat, "In the name of the merciful and compassionate Allah," and perhaps "there is no deity but Allah; Mohammed is the apostle of Allah." But beyond

given by the Biblical writers, that it was cut off from religious communication with the southern, in which the Temple stood, and that it contained, besides, a larger admixture of Canaanitish elements. Hosea's words become intelligible when it is perceived that the word *baal*, innocent enough in itself, and capable of being employed in a good sense, had been the occasion of so much mischief. The very word, he said, would, in the coming time, be taken out of their lips, shunned for its evil associations and the painful recollections which it awakened; and the idea, good enough in itself, which it once denoted, that Israel was the wife of Jahaveh, would be expressed by another term, which *had the same meaning*, but was not surrounded with the same associations. Parallel cases in ecclesiastical and political history will at once occur to the mind of the reader. All this, I say, is conceivable on the Biblical view that Israel had fallen from a better faith and practice; but it is hardly conceivable on any supposition that at Hosea's time, or immediately before it, the Israelites connoted no more by the name Jahaveh than the Canaanities did by the name of the Baalim, and that Hosea, for the first time, was trying to raise them from an ancestral polytheism or syncretism to the recognition of one God. Such a supposition simply contradicts the prophet to his face. There is one consideration which seems to be quite decisive on this subject. Whereas we

this they could not go; and the Christian, pressed to explain his creed, showed how Muslim influences and surroundings had influenced him. "What is meant by the Father?" "That is Allah the most exalted." "And the Son; has Allah a Son?" To which the reply came, "Allah forbid." How easy it would be to show, on critical development principles, that we have here the crude beginnings of Christianity and Islam!

find proper names compounded with the name Baal as freely (though not as extensively) as with the name El, it is remarkable that we have no instances of a similar use of unequivocal proper names of heathen deities—such as Melkart, Eshmun, Astarte, &c.¹—which we should certainly expect if the Israelites were the polytheists they are made out to be. There is, in fact, no instance of any name of God being used to form proper names except the names that were applicable to their own national God. “Even in the times,” says Nöldeke,² “which are reckoned those of the worst idolatry, there does not appear a single name of a foreign god in the proper names of Israelites—a proof that the people, even when they sacrificed to Baal and Astarte, ever felt that they were wrong, and that they might never denote themselves as worshippers of their deities by naming themselves after them. That no member of the house of Ahab, which the tradition still indicates as the most idolatrous, bore the name of Baal, and that, on the contrary, that king’s son, by his name Jehoram, as well as his sister or daughter Athaliah, belonged to the god of the country, is here significant enough.”

From another quarter instances have lately been pointed out of what is alleged to have been the employment by the Israelites of names of heathen deities, without any compunction as to their idolatrous associations, and affording a presumption that the pre-prophetic religion of Israel was not the pure Jahavism which Biblical writers represent it to be.

¹ Baethgen, *Beiträge zur Semitischen Religionsgeschichte*, p. 145.

² In *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morg. Gesell.*, vol. xv. p. 809.

Sayce, in his "Hibbert Lecture" on the religion of the ancient Babylonians, has pointed out various indications of the contact of Babylonian civilisation and religion with those of Palestine, surviving in names of places, such as Nebo, Ann and Anatu, and Sinai.¹ The existence of such names, which are names of Babylonian deities, attached to places in Palestine, is certainly significant. The recent discovery of the clay tablets at Tell-el-Amarna may, by showing the early prevalence of Babylonian influence, make the thing more intelligible: it may also tend to modify the view which Sayce seems to hold on the special point before us. It is this: Among the Babylonian deities whose names have been recovered from the inscriptions is one whose Accadian name was translated into the Semitic Ramânu = the exalted one, which the Hebrew writers have handed down to us under the form Rimmon. Now Rimmon was the name of the supreme god of the Syrians of Damascus, and was there identified with the sun-god Hadad.² The name, he says, made its way to the non-Semitic tribes of the Taurus, and to Edom, and "like Hadad of Edom, David of Israel will thus have borne a name which the people about him applied to their sovereign god." Elsewhere³ he explains that Hadad, the supreme Baal or sun-god, whose worship extended from Carchemish to Edom and Palestine, is spoken of by Shalmaneser under the abbreviated name of Dâda, as a name current in the north; and that in the south the name was confounded with the Semitic word which appears in

¹ Hibbert Lecture, p. 42.

² *Ibid.*, p. 202 ff.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 55 ff. Cf. *Modern Review*, Jan. 1884.

Assyrian as *dadu*, "dear little child." This is the word, he says, which we have in Be-dad or Bendad, the father of the Edomite Hadad; we have it also in the David of the Old Testament, David or Dod being the masculine of the feminine form Dido. Thus, according to Sayce, the names of Dodo and David point to a worship of the sun-god under the title of the "beloved one" in southern Canaan as well as in Phœnicia. This he thinks is confirmed by the new reading of the Moabite Stone by Socin and Smend, which would show that the northern Israelites worshipped a Dodo or Dod by the side of Jahaveh, or rather adored the supreme God under the name of Dod (דוד) as well as under that of Jahaveh. According to this reading of the inscription, Mesha says that he carried away the *avel* (or altar) of Dodo from Ataroth and dragged it before Chemosh, and from Nebo the *avels* of Jahaveh, which he likewise dragged before Chemosh. It is suggested that Dod or Dodo was an old title of the supreme God in the Jebusite Jerusalem, and that this explains the word *Dodi* ("my beloved") in the brief song in Isa. v. We can easily understand, he concludes, how a name of this kind, with such a signification, should have been transferred by popular affection from the deity, to the king of whom it is said that "all Israel and Judah loved him" (1 Sam. xviii. 16).¹

¹ As long ago as 1812 Dammier explained the name David, "beloved one," as properly a name of the god after whom the Moloch-worshipping king called himself. And in keeping with the idea that the victim offered to Moloch was regarded as his bride, he explains the names Hebron, Kirjath Arba, where David reigned, as derived from *haber*, a companion, lover, and *rova*, to lie down. In the same connection Og, king of Bashan, is explained as a fiery oxen, and his famous bedstead as the iron bed on which the victims were laid.—Feuer und Molochdienst der alten Hebräer, p. 99 f.

What Sayce maintains is, that the name David, as also the names Saul and Solomon,¹ were not names given in childhood, but were subsequently applied. This is actually stated in regard to Solomon (2 Sam. xii. 24, 25); as to David, he inclines to the view of those critics who maintain that his name originally was El-hanan or Baal-hanan, and that in 2 Sam. xxi. 19, xxiii. 24, we ought to read "Elhanan who is Dodo" or David. Saul too, he says, is a secondary name, meaning in Hebrew the one asked for by the people; but it really was the name of a Babylonian deity, Savul or Sawul,² transported to Edom, and perhaps also to Palestine. Solomon also is a divine name, the cuneiform inscriptions informing us that Sallimannu, "the god of peace," was a god honoured particularly in Assyria, where the name of more than one king (Shalman-eser) was compounded with it.

Similarly, Sayce claims that the name of Moses³ is not derived from the language of Egypt, but from *Masu*, an older form of Semitic than that preserved in the Old Testament—*i.e.*, the Assyrian. The word means "hero," and is applied to more than one deity, particularly to Adar, a form of the sun-god, and to Merodach, the tutelary god of Babylon, and Nergal, the sun of night. It also signifies "collector of books." In the sense of "hero" it made its way into astrology, and *Másu*, the hero of astronomers, must have been the sun-god. It is not more strange, he continues, that a name thus intimately associated with the religious and astrological beliefs of Baby-

¹ Hibbert Lecture, pp. 51, 52.

² Hibbert Lecture, p. 54.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 43 ff.

lonia should have found its way west, than that names like Nebo (where Moses died), in sight of the "moon city" Jericho, and Sin, which last we know, from a Himyaritic inscription, had been carried south into Arabia, should have been so transported. It may have been carried north as well, and perhaps the wilderness of Sin is a trace of it, and therefore a shrine may have existed on Sinai before the Israelites begged to be allowed to go a three days' journey to it.

Once more, the name Joseph, which, in the Old Testament, is variously derived from Hebrew roots,¹ is the name of a deity that was worshipped by the older inhabitants of Canaan. Thothmes III., more than two centuries before the date given by Egyptologists for the exodus, mentions on the walls of Karnak the names of cities captured by him in Palestine, among which are Yaqab-el (Jacob the god) and Iseph-el ("Joseph the god"). Therefore, he says, we are tempted to think that "the house of Joseph" may have belonged to an earlier period than that in which it was applied to the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh, and that perhaps "the house of Joseph" was simply "Beth-el." For in Assyrian, *asipu* or *asip* is = diviner, and the phrase "house of the oracle" is actually met with. Therefore, though not proved, it is probable that Joseph was originally equal to the Babylonian *asipu*, "the god of the oracle," and that long before the Israelitish house of Joseph took possession of Luz, it had been a house of Joseph in another sense, and the sanctuary of a Canaanitish oracle.

¹ Hibbert Lecture, p. 49 f.

Now what is the bearing of all this on the subject before us? The facts adduced would seem to show that not only names of places in Palestine and the west bore names which were also the names of Assyrian deities, but that even the names of individuals placed by the Biblical writers in the time of the Jahaveh religion, came originally from the same source; and, as Sayce would lead us to infer, were knowingly bestowed upon them with a reference to the deities so named. The conclusion would be that at the time, say, of David and Solomon, not to speak of earlier times, the recognition of Jahaveh as the only God of the Israelites was not so strong as to prevent the free use of the names of other deities beside Him; or, at all events, it did not preclude the naming of Him by the names of other gods.

There are, however, several circumstances to be taken into account which will, if I mistake not, greatly modify such a conclusion. It will be observed, in the first place, that the names upon which this argument is founded are originally appellative names in Assyrian: Dâd, *the exalted one*; Sallimmanu, *the peaceful one*; Mâsu, *lord*; Asip, *diviner*; and so forth. Some of them, as Sallimmanu and Asip,¹ are found also as common appellative names in Hebrew with the same sense; and Dâd has been shown by Sayce himself to be capable of connection with the Hebrew stem meaning *to love*. Then, further, we are to remember the manner in which, and the extent to which, the Semitic inhabitants of Assyria bestowed names upon their gods. The

¹ ܫܠܝܡܢܘܢ See Sayce, Hibbert Lecture, p. 50 f.

words of Sayce, in another part of his *Hibbert Lectures*,¹ are necessary here in order to give us some idea of the mythology of the polytheistic Semitic peoples:—

“Around the three chief gods,” he says, “were grouped the multitudinous deities which Accadian superstition or Semitic piety had invented or dreamed of. Assur-natsir-pal declares that there were ‘65,000 great gods of heaven and earth’; and though we may doubt whether the Assyrian king was not indulging in a little royal exaggeration, it is certain that the task of enumerating them all would have exhausted the most indefatigable of priestly scribes. Besides the numberless minor deities of the towns and villages, there were the divine titles out of which new gods had been evolved; divinities which owed their existence to the linguistic or literary errors of the Semites; and finally, foreign gods like Kiltun and Sumaliya of the Kossæans, or Lagarmai of Susa. . . . When we remember how the background of the vast pantheon was filled with the obscure deities and spirits of the ancient Accadian cult, whose names survived in magical charms and exorcisms, while the air above was occupied by the ‘300 spirits of heaven,’ and the earth below by the ‘600 spirits of earth,’ we begin to realise the force of the expression which made the supreme gods rulers of the legions of earth and sky. *Bil Kissat*, ‘the lord of hosts,’ was a praise full of significance to the believing Babylonian.”²

We thus see that the ancient Babylonians, like the Aryan nations, in order to denote forces operative behind observed phenomena, employed names expressing the agency or operation, and whether or not these were originally applied to one supreme power, they became personifications of individual forces or names of superhuman beings, but the names themselves had primarily a simple enough and harmless enough signification. As to the existence

¹ *Hibbert Lecture*, p. 215 ff.

² See Note XVI.

of such Assyrian names in the Hebrew writings, Sayce points out that there were two periods at which we may assume an active contact with the Semitic thought of Assyria and that of Palestine, either early at the time of the immigration of the Abrahamic tribes from Ur of the Chaldees, or later on during the encroachments of the Assyrians westward, or even during the captivity in Babylon.¹ If we go back to the earliest of these times for the influence of Babylonian religion on the west, there will be nothing extraordinary in the prevalence of Assyrian names of places, or even the existence of proper names of persons corresponding to Babylonian names; for the Biblical writers place the beginnings of the distinctive monotheism of the Hebrews at the time of Abraham's immigration, and declare that the fathers of the patriarch served other gods beyond the river. To place the introduction of such names as have been adduced at either of the later points of contact is surely too late for the purposes of the argument. For though it may be conceivable that legends or beliefs, such as are found in the earliest chapters of Genesis, may have been taken over from the Assyrians or Babylonians as late as the captivity, it is hardly conceivable that the names of David, Solomon, and Saul, not to say those of Joseph and Moses, got into the Hebrew language at that time, or even so comparatively early as the time at which the Assyrians as a conquering power first came upon the horizon of the Israelites, about the ninth century B.C.

¹ Hibbert Lecture, p. 43.

We are therefore entitled to recognise the stems from which the names in question are derived as part of the linguistic stock of the Hebrews, which they had in common with their Semitic brethren in Assyria, and which they used and developed in their own way. If they were simple appellative terms at first, there is no reason why they should not have remained so in the hands of the Hebrews, but every reason to believe that they did. For this is just the distinctive peculiarity of the course which the development of Israel's religion followed—that whereas the heathen Semitic nations ran off into mythology, the Hebrews retained the primary sense of words, and were not led into the deification of mere qualities. The orthodox Mohammedans, to give an illustration of what I mean, have a list of ninety-nine excellent names by which they designate their god; and as they recite these one by one, telling a bead on a rosary with the utterance of each name, they never for a moment regard each as the name of a distinct deity; for as they tell the hundredth bead, they repeat the name of the One of whom all the other names are mere attributes—*Allah!* This is an illustration of how the strong monotheistic instinct preserves itself safe from the influence of names. No one thinks of saying that when one man is named Abd-ul-Kereem, and another Abd-ul-Majeed, or a woman is named Kereemeh, Jameeleh, and so forth, the words Kereem and Majeed, &c., are names of distinct Muslim deities with female consorts; they remain mere adjectives expressing different qualities—*generous, glorious*—ascribed to the one God.

Given the polytheistic bent, however, such names as these become raised to the rank of entities and deities, and so the Assyrian pantheon reached its immense proportions: for every quality that could be assigned to a god, or to the supreme God, takes its place as one of the gods many.

Now, when we remember the close resemblance between all the Semitic branches of language, is there anything remarkable in the fact that out of the extensive treasury of vocables that might thus become names of Assyrian deities, a very considerable number should coincide with Hebrew proper names? Why, if a volley were fired at random from the 65,000 (or even much smaller number of) names ascribed to the gods, I suppose that scarcely a vocable in the poor Hebrew language, noun, verb, or particle, would escape deification. That for such a common stem as that lying at the root of Solomon's name (the common Semitic word for peace), we should have to go to the name of an Assyrian deity—when these were so easily manufactured—seems a refinement of ingenuity that defeats its own end. For no Hebrew, on this mode of reasoning, would be safe to use a single word of his language without committing himself to polytheistic notions. If, for example, the name of Moses simply means lord or hero, and was applied to *many* gods, the most that can be inferred from its presence in Hebrew is, that a root which is no longer found in Hebrew goes back to an old common Semitic origin, and may have been used like *baal* as a quite harmless word. A very significant circumstance is that

this supposed mode of giving names is not in keeping with the Hebrew and general Semitic custom, according to which the proper names of this class are *compounded* with some name of deity, but are not, as this supposition requires, the actual names of the gods.¹ In view of this remarkable difference, and the fact that these names can all be explained in a simpler manner without going so far afield, I am brought to the conclusion that there is nothing in the argument beyond the wealth of learning with which it is maintained.

But in truth, this mode of arguing from names, apart from the historical circumstances, is quite misleading, and might be employed to prove the most absurd positions if applied to modern names. Yet it is just one of those arguments which have a glamour of something deep and recondite about them, and lead people to say "There is something in them." The thing regarding which we want information is not proved, and cannot be proved on this line of reasoning—viz., whether or not David's parents or his countrymen by the term Dād understood a heathen god who at that time was revered by neighbouring peoples, and gave him the name in honour of that deity; or whether they called their own God Jahaveh by that name. The only attempt at historical proof of this given by Sayce is the doubtful interpretation of an obscure phrase on the Moabite Stone. For the rest, his argument might as well prove that we still believe in the old Scandinavian

¹ If there are exceptions to the rule they are very rare. Baethgen mentions Anath found as a personal name, and perhaps also a name of deity in the expression Beth Anath.—*Beiträge zur Semitischen Religionsgeschichte*, p. 141.

gods because we name the days of the week from those deities; or that, for example, the existence of a family of the name of King in the United States, would show that the people of that country had a monarchical government; or that Isidore, the bishop of Seville, was a worshipper of Isis; or the Numidian bishop Asmunius was a worshipper of or named after the god Eshmun.¹

The particulars we have been considering are but parts of a very wide subject, to which I can only briefly allude—the mythological treatment of the Old Testament. Some have carried this mode of viewing the materials to such an extent as to find the whole cycle of the Aryan Sun mythology in the stories of the patriarchs and the judges.² It seems to me that to identify proper names like those of David and Solomon with Assyrian names of deities, is but part of the same mode of reasoning; and that the explanation of the phenomena which are made to lend countenance to the view in either case is the same as I have hinted at. A language has a number of primary words denoting certain simple conceptions; and using these, it gives names to persons and to things cognisable by the senses, or intuitively perceived, or inferred by the reason. But if we find the same name applied to a visible and to an invisible thing, are we to conclude that it was first given to the invisible and then borrowed for the visible? This would be a most extraordinary freak of language and of thought. To keep to the examples we have had. If we find that *baal* is the common

¹ Baethgen, *Beiträge*, p. 141.

² See Note XVII.

name for lord or husband, but is also used of the deity, are we to suppose that a husband of a wife and the owner of an ox were so called because beforehand men had applied the name Baal to the unseen power or powers behind nature? Or because the name *adon* is found in Hebrew meaning master, and is also applied to the Lord, are we to suppose that earthly masters were so named because the mind had first arrived at the conclusion that there was a Master and Lord of Creation? Or again, if Molech (=ruler) is the name of any king, and also of a god of a people, are we to assume that all who called their kings by this name named them after the god? Further, if two kindred Semitic branches start with a common stock (so far as it goes) of such primary words, and we find that one branch ran into mythology, and instead of retaining the primary senses of their words, allowed them to become personifications, are we to conclude that another branch, which in clear historical times shows the widest divergence in its modes of conception, is to be held committed, in the use of the primary words, to the secondary application of them made by the kindred stock? When put in this way, I think that the precariousness (to say the least) of the mythological argument will appear. I do not think it is likely that a people first found names for a host of unseen beings or forces, before giving names to themselves and things around them (the very usage in Assyrian shows that the reverse was the case); and if in giving these names they employed the only materials their language furnished, it need not be surprising if gods and men and trees

got finally the same or similar names. If the idea of strong attaches to the word *el*, and if a certain kind of tree is called "a strong thing," and the deity or nature spirit is called "the strong one," we are not to jump to the conclusion that the tree was so named because a deity resided in it. But this is actually the view, as we shall see, that Stade takes in regard to this word; though such reasoning can only lead to mystification, as may be shown by another example. There is a word in Hebrew, *Abir* (אביר), meaning "mighty" or "strong," and it is used as a name of God in the expressions "Mighty One of Israel" or "of Jacob." A slightly different form of the word, *Abbir* (אביר), is used as a name of the ox; it is applied also to the horse, as also to princes, and is used in the general sense of "strong." Now this word is so temptingly like the name of Apis, the Egyptian bull god (being, as has just been said, also applied to the bull), that mythologists have found it sufficient to hang an argument upon, to the effect that the calf-worship was originally part of the genuine Jahaveh religion, and that traces of the fact remain in the application of the very name of Apis to Jahaveh Himself. This is but a specimen of the kind of argument that perplexes those who do not look narrowly into the state of the matter; which simply resolves itself into this, that the idea of strength was naturally applied to the ox, or the horse, or a prince, and just as naturally attributed to God. It would be quite possible, on this mode of reasoning, to make heathen gods out of many of the words that we employ in daily speech.

It cannot be denied that Hebrew literature is singularly free from mythological ideas such as we find in other early literatures. With a highly poetic mode of conception, metaphors of the boldest kind and the freest personifications were not only possible, but were freely employed. Yet the writers of the Old Testament do not allow themselves to be carried away by their words. The thing personified remains the thing all the time, though fields clap hands, and floods lift up their voices, and trees rejoice; and as it would be quite unfair to take such modes of expression as proofs that originally the fields and floods and trees were endowed with personality, so it is unfair to press such common appellative names as we have been considering into the service of a theory of mythology.

M. Renan, indeed, who is inclined to ascribe an inherent tendency to monotheism to all the Semitic races, or at least to the nomad sections of them, says that the attributing of life to words is the cause of mythology, and that the Semitic languages do not lend themselves much to these kinds of personification.¹ But the fact remains that other branches of the Semitic family ran into mythology, while the Hebrew race alone was preserved from it. The Semitic names El, Baal, &c., says Baudissin,² we judge to be different from the Aryan names not so much on account of the different genius of the Semitic language, as on account of the different conception formed of the deity. And Andrew Lang

¹ *Hist. du Peuple d'Israel*, i. p. 46.

² *Jahve et Moloch*, p. 10.

observes truly that it is a certain condition of thought, a certain habit of mind, and not a disease of this or that language, that is the cause of mythology. "It is just as easy," he says, "to say heaven is a lover, earth his wife, in a language where heaven is *Samû* and earth is *Ars*, as in a language where heaven is *Uranus* and earth is *Gaea*, as in Greek, or where heaven is *Rangi* and earth is *Papa*, as in New Zealand." The same writer, after pointing out the insufficiency of the various explanations that have been given of the so-called *myths* of the Old Testament, and the essential and striking differences to be perceived between them and the myths of kindred or similarly situated peoples, concludes: "The whole question may be insoluble, but is eternally attractive. Behind it all is the mystery of race and of *selection*. It is an ultimate fact in the history and government of the world, this eminent genius of one tiny people for religion. We know no more; and in M. Renan's own terms, the people was 'selected,' just as, in words more familiar, Israel is 'the chosen people.'"¹

In conclusion, it seems to me that this reasoning from names proves either by far too much for the theory, or proves nothing at all to the argument in hand. If we are to infer from every Hebrew proper name which may correspond etymologically with some god-name of a foreign people, that the Israelites *at the time* they named their children in this manner believed in or gave reverence to these heathen gods, we manifestly prove too much, for there are far too

¹ The New Review, No. 3, August 1889.

many of these names, and at the time at which they are found we are in the light of history, and yet find no other proofs of recognition of such deities. Or if it is merely argued that the presence of such names among the Hebrews proves that "originally" the Hebrews believed in all these deities, the answer to the argument is twofold,—(a) that we do not know what is meant by "originally," and (b) that the so-called original belief may resolve itself into a necessary imperfection of language, whereby metaphor was employed, it might have been innocently enough, by the Israelite forefathers. We have seen, from this mode of mythological reasoning, enough to convince any fair-minded person how very vague and precarious are the conclusions to which it may be made to lead. Vague, because the argument does not undertake to show the precise historical periods at which the mythological conceptions prevailed, but hints at "original" usages, and faded myths, and so forth. And precarious, because the unwary reader is apt to conclude that every so-called mythological expression is an indication of a mythological belief on the part of the writer employing it, which certainly cannot be proved.

CHAPTER VIII.

PRE-PROPHETIC RELIGION CONTINUED—THE DWELLING-PLACE OF THE DEITY.

The critical position that Israel's God had His original dwelling on Sinai, or was limited to Canaan—Deborah's song—David driven out from the presence of the Lord—The wider reference of the argument—Association of Juhureh with the sanctuaries of the land: His dwelling in the ark—In short, the worship of pre-prophetic Israel was that of the high places; and this, according to Stade, arose from the veneration paid to graves of ancestors—The view said to be confirmed by the veneration paid to trees, stones, &c., pointing to original fetish-worship—This part of the theory examined—Remark on the use made of documents in this argument—Confusion of Stade's argument; reasoning from history of other nations is begging the question; and for the rest, the argument is mainly based on a forced interpretation of metaphorical language—Popular superstition must be admitted everywhere, but its existence is no proof of the non-existence of a pure faith—A nature-God and a God of nature—A sure method of testing this precarious mode of reasoning; check metaphorical language by unambiguous expressions in the same composition, and appeal to books of earliest writing prophets.

A FAVOURITE line of argument to prove the low tone of the pre-prophetic religion is, that the God of the Hebrews was regarded by them as confined to, or

inseparably linked to, their native land, just as the gods of the nations were the patrons and defenders of their territories.

Palestine, we are told, was not indeed the original seat of Jahaveh, as it was not the original home of Israel. His original abode was Mount Sinai, a mountain sacred of old time among Semitic peoples, from which He came with Israel when they emerged from the desert, fighting at the head of their armies till they subdued Canaan, and returning again to His ancient seat when the war was over. This is proved, as it is maintained, by the song of Deborah, one of the oldest compositions that have come down to us,¹ in which, in Wellhausen's words, Jahaveh "is summoned to come from Sinai to succour His oppressed people, and to place Himself at the head of His warriors."²

Let us try to picture to ourselves the situation which is here set before us. In a time of sore straits, when the tribes of Israel come to deadly grips with the armies of Sisera, in the north of Palestine, they find themselves with nothing but their own arms to rely upon. The only assurance of divine presence they have is the ark, the symbol or representation of Jahaveh, who continued to dwell on Sinai long after the Israelites had settled in Palestine.³ They long for the direct help of their God. They summon Him, and He comes to their

¹ It is not safe, however, in these days, to assert anything as undisputed in regard to the dates of Hebrew documents: for quite recently we have been told that this song of Deborah, which "has been believed to be ancient, is, on the contrary, of very late date, and consequently unworthy of credence."—Maurice Vernes, *Les Résultats de l'Exegèse Biblique*, p. 21.

² *Hist. of Israel*, p. 344.

³ *Ibid.*

aid. What does all this mean? If they prayed to Him to come, they have already a pretty advanced idea of the power of a God so far distant to hear them and to interfere on their behalf. The truth is, the song says not a word of Jahaveh being "summoned" from Sinai on the occasion of the battle referred to. The only show of support for such an idea is to be found in an obscure expression in verse 13, which may be rendered, "Then a remnant of nobles (and of) the people did go down; the Lord went down to my help among the mighty" (Queen's Printer's Bible). As for the expressions near the beginning of the song (vv. 4, 5), they have no reference to Jahaveh being "summoned" from Sinai, but consist of a highly poetic description, to be placed side by side with the similar language in Ps. lxxviii. 7, 8, of the manifestation of Jahaveh at Sinai. All such highly figurative expressions are most naturally to be understood as referring to the extraordinary transactions, in whatever sense we may understand them, that all tradition places in the time immediately succeeding the exodus—transactions to which the heart of the people would turn in every time of danger to give them trust in their covenant God. Nay, the expressions are such that Bertheau, in his commentary on the passage, concludes that Jahaveh's seat is to be understood, according to the popular belief which here finds utterance, not on Sinai, but on some mountain to the north or east of Palestine,—for it is said, "When Thou wentest forth out of Seir, when Thou marchedst out of the field of Edom, the earth

trembled, . . . even yon Sinai, at the presence of the Lord, the God of Israel." From this he reasons that the original abode of Jahaveh—in the popular conception—was elsewhere, and that the verses describe His removal to meet Israel as they came out of Egypt. However this may be, even if we admit that the popular conception embodied in the song made Sinai His peculiar dwelling-place, we cannot accept the view that Jahaveh is regarded by the author of this song as limited by space or time in the circumscribed way imputed to Him; but, on the contrary, we are bound to conclude that the poet looked upon Him as one whose power could be exerted, as on Sinai, so in North Palestine, a land which He had not yet made His own, according to the theory. That this more exalted view is the only one in keeping with the tenor of the song, will, I think, be evident to one reading the whole piece, with its ever-recurring "Bless ye Jahaveh"; and its grand conclusion, "So let all thine enemies perish, O Jahaveh; but let them that love Him be as the sun when he goeth forth in his might." Whatever may have been the earliest conceptions entertained of Jahaveh, or the conceptions of the people generally at their lowest, the tribes of Israel must have had convictions based on experience of the power of their God to help them anywhere before a poet could have celebrated the events of that day in the strains here employed.

Another argument is drawn from the alleged fact that even in David's time Jahaveh's power to hear and to help was circumscribed by the boundaries of

the Holy Land;¹ for David complains in regard to his enemies: "They have driven me out this day that I should not cleave unto [have no share in, *marg.*] the inheritance of Jahaveh, saying, Go, serve other gods" (1 Sam. xxvi. 19). The passage has been made a great deal of by most writers of the modern school. But they may be asked to explain the meaning of the same expressions, put even more strongly, in a book which belongs, according to them, to a period when the "ethic monotheism" had asserted itself. In Deuteronomy chap. xxviii., among the misfortunes threatened for disobedience of Jahaveh's law, it is said: "Jahaveh shall bring thee, and thy king which thou shalt set over thee, unto a nation which thou hast not known, thou nor thy fathers; and there shalt thou serve other gods, wood and stone" (v. 36): and again,—"Jahaveh shall scatter thee among all peoples, from the one end of the earth even unto the other end of the earth; and there thou shalt serve other gods, which thou hast not known, thou nor thy fathers, even wood and stone" (v. 64). This is surely as strong an expression of the idea that foreign countries were under the tutelary care of foreign divinities as the words of David. Whatever may have been the precise signification of such phrases to the minds of the ordinary people employing them (if they had a *precise* signification at all), we are not justified in concluding that in either of the passages they amounted to a belief that the power of Jahaveh ceased when His worshipper went beyond Palestine.

¹ See Note XVIII.

David, in point of fact, was in the wilderness of Ziph, within the inheritance of Jahaveh, in that sense, when he used the words. And let the context in the book of Deuteronomy be noted. Immediately after the verse last quoted, follow the words: "And among these nations shalt thou find no ease, and there shall be no rest for the sole of thy foot; but Jahaveh shall give thee there a trembling heart, and failing of eyes, and pining of soul," &c. (v. 65). Moreover, in chap. xxx. 1-3, we have the following: "It shall come to pass, when all these things are come upon thee, the blessing and the curse, which I have set before thee, and thou shalt call them to mind among all the nations whither Jahaveh thy God hath driven thee, and shalt return unto Jahaveh thy God, and shalt obey His voice, according to all that I command thee this day, . . . that then Jahaveh thy God will turn thy captivity, and have compassion upon thee, and will return and gather thee from all the peoples, whither Jahaveh thy God hath scattered thee. If any of thine outcasts be in the uttermost parts of heaven, from thence will Jahaveh thy God gather thee," &c., &c. From all which we conclude that the "serving of other gods," which is made a necessary consequence of being driven out from the inheritance of Jahaveh, must be taken in a sense compatible with the belief that He has power to control the destinies of His outcast ones in their banishment, to hear their penitent cry, and to bring them again, in spite of their enemies and in spite of strange gods, to their own land. There is not a

particle of proof that David thought his God would no longer be able to hear and help him when he was driven away from his own home; and there is explicit proof that the writer of the words in Deuteronomy, while employing expressions exactly like David's, held quite the opposite. And thus the refutation of this low view of the Davidic religion gives a very strong confirmation to the Biblical view, for it brings to light a conception in pre-prophetic Israel—at the time of the Judges even—of Jahaveh's power to hear and help, which we have no reason to believe other nations entertained of their gods. The instance brought forward by Renan¹ stands on a much lower level. A certain Salmsézab, in an inscription found at Teïma, in the heart of Arabia, not only stipulates his right to offer in a strange land sacrifices to his own god, whose priest he is, but desires that the gods of these strange countries, whose power he recognises, may be pleased with the sacrifices which he will offer to his own god, and regard them as offered to themselves. Moreover, he desires that the sacred place consecrated to his god may be under the protection of the gods of Teïma; he establishes and endows in a strange land the worship of his own god; and the gods of Teïma accept the stipulation, become guarantees for its performance, and accord their protection to Salmsézab. With this proceeding M. Renan compares the vow of Jacob at Beth-el, "If Jahaveh be with me, and keep me in the way that I go, . . . Jahaveh shall be my God, and this stone shall be

¹ *Histoire du Peuple d'Israel*, vol. 1. p. 36.

Beth-elohim:” and he adds,¹—“Perhaps under the reign of Solomon there took place more than one convention of this kind. Perhaps even the temple of Solomon saw Tyrians sacrificing to Baal, with the pretension that these sacrifices were not disagreeable to Jahaveh.”

All this is very different from anything we find in the actual documents. Jacob never mentions the gods of the strange land into which he is going, but considers the presence of his own God sufficient for protection and sustenance. And in Deuteronomy the God of the scattered Israelites is to be with them, inflicting chastisement, hearing their prayer, and bringing them back without any reference to the power of the heathen gods. As to what went on at Jerusalem in Solomon’s time, the Biblical historians make no effort to conceal his doings; and notwithstanding the assertion to the contrary, we have very good reason for believing that his conduct did not pass without rebuke from the men of his own time. There is nothing to favour the view of Renan that an eclecticism of gods was the authorised or even the current religious practice of those times. On the contrary, as we have already seen that even in the most idolatrous times the people refrained from naming themselves after foreign gods, so, also, wherever we find the worship of such gods mentioned, there is always the accompanying consciousness that they are foreign gods, and not the rightful objects of worship to the Israelites.

It is to be observed, however, that the argument

¹ *Histoire du Peuple d’Israel*, vol. i. p. 38.

as to the dwelling-place of deity is, in principle, much more than an attempt to prove Jahaveh's close association with Mount Sinai or the Holy Land. It is maintained that there are even more crude or elementary conceptions of the dwelling-place and energy of the national god, which prove clearly "that the pre-prophetic religion of Israel grew out of a blending of the Jahaveh religion with certain elements of an older animistic or fetishistic religion found on the west of the Jordan."¹ The ancient Israelite, says Stade, had no idea that God dwelt in heaven. If he is the god of the thunder and lightning, he might have been supposed to dwell above the clouds. But that view was not taken. He dwells on earth, although the views as to the precise place he inhabits are confused and contradictory. Along with the belief accepted by Israel in the adoption of the Jahaveh religion, that He had His dwelling on Sinai, is found the widespread belief that Jahaveh inhabits the sanctuaries of the land. It was a common belief among primitive peoples that the deity dwelt where he was worshipped, being confined in the temple, and that he left the sanctuary before it passed into the hands of an enemy. The belief, too, among ancient Israel amounted to this, that Jahaveh in His entirety inhabited each sanctuary. He was not held to be everywhere present, but He was to be found at these different sanctuaries.

Stade explains the origin of this belief by the fact that the sanctuaries in question were, before the Israelite conquest of Canaan, the abodes of different

¹ Stade, *Geschichte*, I. p. 446.

Canaanite *numina*, and that when the Jahaveh worship overcame the Canaanite religion, Jahaveh took possession of these holy places. And so it came about that the old Israelite, without feeling conscious of the contradiction to the Jahaveh religion which it involved, spoke of the "god of Dan" and the "god of Beersheba" (Amos viii. 14);¹ of the Jahaveh Shalom at Ophrah (Judges vi. 24); of the El who had revealed himself at Beth-el (Gen. xxxi. 13); as also of the One who appeared to Hagar (Gen. xvi. 13). And expressions used by the prophets, such as "the sin of Samaria" (Amos viii. 14), "the calf of Samaria," (Hosea viii. 5, 6), are just their mode of indicating what, in the popular language, would be "the god or Jahaveh of Samaria." Yea, the prophets not only do not fully break away from this old popular conception; they actually take it up in another form. They reprove the people, for example, for localising God at Beth-el, and so forth, but take it as a matter of course that He has His dwelling on Mount Zion at Jerusalem,² which was, as Ezekiel expresses it, the place of His throne and the place of the soles of His feet (Ezek. xliii. 7); and which, as that prophet believes, He forsook before the destruction of Jerusalem. How then was this dwelling of Jahaveh at different sanctuaries reconciled with the belief in His unity? In this way. The place was not considered sacred because Jahaveh dwelt there, but because He had once appeared there. This was the way that the priestly legend accounted for the existence and reverence of these

¹ Geschichte, i. p. 447.

² Ibid., p. 448.

sacred places, associating each of them with some theophany in the lives of the patriarchs or national heroes. So Hebron, Beersheba, Ophrah, Beth-el, Zion, had each its story connected with it of a manifestation of Jahaveh to His favoured ones. But this mode of accommodation is contradicted by the usage of the ritual language which represents Jahaveh as located in the Temple of Jerusalem from the time that His ark was placed there. This localising of Jahaveh's presence at different sanctuaries is of course, Stade proceeds, opposed to the true Jahaveh religion. The God who had brought the people from Sinai was everywhere present, and could be worshipped everywhere; but in practice, and in point of fact, He was honoured only at particular places. The priestly account of the matter was, that He could be worshipped only at places where He had made His presence known, and even the book of the Covenant assumes the same thing (Exod. xx. 24). But as these sanctuaries were in existence before Israel came into the land, and as they coincided with certain prominent features of the country, we must conclude that the proposition, "Jahaveh is to be worshipped wherever He has made Himself known to the fathers," simply amounts to this: "Jahaveh is worshipped wherever He has in fact been believed to reside."

Sothen, Stade argues, the whole worship of ancient Israel comes under the category of the worship so much blamed by the prophets—viz., the worship of "the high places, under green trees." We have good grounds, he says, for concluding that every promi-

ment situation had its *Bamah*, or high place, just as every good site in Christian countries has its church. The belief that the gods inhabit the hills is found among ancient Greeks, Romans, and Indians; and in no Semitic land is it more strikingly seen than in Palestine, in which a sacredness attaches to every mountain,¹ and in which we have quite a number of places named *Ramah*, *Mizpah*, *Gibeah*, all of a sacred character. It is a mistake to suppose that such places were the seats of an old astral or solar worship: they were old sacred places or seats of deity, and became sacred to Jahaveh after Israel passed into the country. The prophets call the old Israelite worship the worship of the high places, and the Syrians are made to say that the gods of the Hebrews are gods of the hills (1 Kings xx. 23).

To explain how this worship of the high places originated, Stade says it is to be noted that at these sacred places are found graves of patriarchs or other heroes. Thus Hebron was the burying-place of Abraham, and, according to later tradition, of the whole family of the patriarchs. In Shechem the bones of Joseph are placed; Kadesh-Barnea is associated with the oldest traditions of the tribe of Levi; and there Miriam is buried. We find also sacred *trees* at most of these places, or sacred *fountains*, as at Beersheba,² and sacred stones at Beth-el and elsewhere. And in these particulars there is a great resemblance to the legends attached to the graves of Greek heroes. The conclusion to which Stade comes from these indications is, that before there was an

¹ Geschichte, i. p. 449 f.

² Ibid., i. p. 451.

altar and offering of sacrifices to Jahaveh at Hebron and Shechem, for example, it had been a custom to make offerings at these places to the souls of the heroes whose names are associated with each place; and thus we obtain proof that the worship of ancestors was a primitive usage among the Hebrews.¹ The graves of ever so many of the legendary personages are thus specially mentioned. The remarkable exception in the case of Moses, whose grave is not known, may be a silent protest against the worship of ancestors, which is opposed to the religion which Moses made known. Or it may be that he is less of a legendary character than others whose graves are known; although it is not to be concluded that every one whose grave is honoured is a legendary character.

A confirmation of the position now reached is found, Stade proceeds, in the proofs we have that trees, stones, and so forth, were also considered sacred objects among the ancient Hebrews. By the altars in the high places trees were planted, and pillars of wood and Maçcebas of stone were set up; and these are condemned by the prophets as elements of the old false worship. The names given to the trees,—*ēlah*, *ēlôn*; *allah*, *allôn*,—though generally explained to mean terebinth and oak, have no doubt a trace of old animistic belief attached to them, for the *ēlah* or *allah* (according to the Masoretic pointing made to differ, but consonantly identical אֱלֹהִים) is no doubt the *nomen unitatis* of *ēl*, which has its

¹ Stade ascribes to this custom as a social influence the formation of families into septs and then into tribes. The derivation of whole tribes from a common ancestor and the naming of them by his name thus rest, according to this view, on ancestral worship.

plural *ēlīm*. The green tree, with its perennial life, was thus no doubt among the Hebrews, as among pagans, regarded as animated with the life of a *numen*. The reverence for sacred stones is no less remarkable. The stone at Beth-el is invested with sanctity and worshipped, and there are several such stones at Gilgal. Though all these again are explained as made sacred by some appearance of Jahaveh at the place where they are found, it is clear they are traces of old fetishistic worship. And the best proof of all is the story of the sacred ark itself, which cannot be regarded as different essentially from other sacred arks of a similar kind among Etruscans, Egyptians, Trojans, and Greeks, which contained images or fetishes. For by the ancient Israelite, Jahaveh was supposed actually to dwell in the ark; and only in this way is explained the misfortune of the loss of the ark in the Philistine war, and the great care which David took to place it in a safe place at Jerusalem. The tradition that the ark contained two tables of stone undoubtedly rests on some fact, and this fact is that ancient Israel had such an ark with two actual stones—perhaps meteoric stones—connected with and representing the god of the storm. The priestly explanation here given, again, is perhaps a silent rebuke of the primitive fetish-worship, when it represents the stones as being the two tables of the law.

There is in this a great deal that is exceedingly ingenious. There is much also that is suggestive and valuable, from the point of view of the comparative study of religions, as showing how the religious

sentiment finds expression for itself through the medium of language and forms. Thought is at all times limited and circumscribed when it sets itself to give expression to supersensible things; forms more or less crude, and language necessarily metaphorical, must be resorted to; and in this respect the development of religious thought must ever be the same among all peoples. We must, however, be careful, in reasoning from the outward forms in which such sentiments are expressed, to test our conclusions by actual facts if they are available, showing the sense that underlay the forms. In Stade's reasoning, however, there is a great deal of debatable matter, not only in the bold inferences drawn, but in the statements of assumed fact. There is, moreover, such a display of erudition, such a combination of diverse materials, and piecing together of things that stand far apart, that, unless we look into his argument somewhat closely, we shall be smothered in a mass of distracting particulars.

A remark may be made at the outset on the peculiar manipulation of the "sources" in this argument. Writers of Stade's school are never tired of repeating that written documents give us certain information only in regard to the period at which they are composed. They declare, at the same time, that we have no authentic written documents before the eighth or ninth century B.C. These documents, therefore, ought only to be taken as evidences of the religious conceptions of that period; and yet Stade relies on them for proof of the religious beliefs of

Israel at the time of, and even long before the time of Moses. This he does, however, only when he finds elements giving countenance to his own theory; for the moment that a writer of this period gives his testimony to the Biblical theory, his evidence is discredited as a modern reading of old facts, or even a later interpolation of a redactor. To such straits are writers of this school reduced, that they have to employ discredited works to build up their own theory—reminding one of the Irish Board of Guardians who resolved first to build a new workhouse out of the materials of the old; and secondly, to allow the old workhouse to stand till the new one was erected. If those stories of the patriarchs and suchlike, which are here appealed to, are of value for determining the ideas of that early age, what becomes of the assertion that they are the late dressing up of historical events? If, strictly taken, they are merely the expression of the ideas of writers of the ninth century, we are as far as ever from reaching the early age. If, again, the argument is based on the forms of speech, it is another case of false reasoning from metaphorical or mythological language, such as we saw in the last chapter.

To come, however, to Stade's argument, there seems to me to be some confusion in his reasoning. He asserts that the pre-prophetic religion of Israel grew out of a blending of the Jahaveh religion with elements of an older fetishistic kind found on the west of the Jordan;¹ and afterwards, in speaking of the localising of Jahaveh at the different sanctuaries,

¹ Geschichte, i. p. 446.

he says: "This localising of Jahaveh's presence at different sanctuaries is of course opposed to the true Jahaveh religion. The God who had brought the people from Sinai was everywhere present and could be worshipped everywhere; but in point of fact and in practice, He was honoured only at particular places."¹ Here it would seem to be implied that the lower animistic and fetishistic elements were found by Israel on their entrance into Canaan, and taken into the Jahaveh religion; and also that, whereas they had attained under Moses to the idea that God was everywhere present, yet on coming into the land of Canaan, they learned to localise Him. Stade thus seems inadvertently to admit the Biblical statement of the case—viz., that Israel in Canaan learned the ways of the Canaanites, and thereby fell away from their own God. He can scarcely, however, mean this, or imply that Israel, when they received the knowledge of Jahaveh, had no superstitions of their own, for his whole argument is led with a view of reaching the nature basis of the *pre-Mosaic* religion. It is strange, in this view, that he should have to come to Canaan for so much; and he ought to tell us clearly whether the process of development after Moses was a process of deterioration from the Jahaveh religion, or a process of elimination of older animistic notions by the force of the new faith, or whether both processes went on simultaneously. No one doubts that the *popular* religion was deeply affected by contact with Canaanish idolatry; nor need we ignore the tendency seen

¹ Geschichte, I. p. 449.

everywhere, ever when a purer faith has been learned, to run into carnal and limited conceptions and modes of expression, and the cropping up everywhere in human history of the hard granite of underlying superstition. Stade himself, however, falls back upon the existence of a purer and better religion, made known in the time of Moses; and if this point is established, the Biblical theory is so far confirmed.

In the absence of direct historical evidence in regard to the earlier periods of Israel's history, Stade refers to the conditions under which tribes were formed among the ancient inhabitants of Greece and Rome, and the mode of growth of the pre-Islamic Bedawin tribes. Such comparisons are deeply instructive for the light they throw upon the manner in which the human mind comports itself when confronted with the problems of religion. Yet the history of the religious life of Israel is so unique that we have always to be on our guard against assuming for it precisely the same kind of development as is found in other nations. It may be that the religious phraseology of the Hebrews is exactly like that of polytheistic nations, though Renan, for example, would deny it; and it may be safe to infer that this similarity proves that the *primitive* notions of both were similar. But the question is, When was the primitive stage among the Hebrews? The first attempts of man to express conceptions of unseen things result in metaphor, and all religious language is metaphorical. But metaphorical language may be employed by a people long after they

have passed beyond a primitive stage of intelligence. We use to the present day, without being misled by it, phraseology full of anthropomorphisms, and speak of God in the very language employed in the earliest Hebrew writings. To take such phrases in the strictly literal sense, and to maintain that where they were employed by the Hebrews they had that sense, is to ignore the simplest laws of language, and to overlook the growth of reflection. Surely no one expects to find in the pre-prophetic period the abstractions and generalisations of the modern philosophy of religion. The very best of the prophets never moved in that direction; their conceptions of God may be said to be not so much exegitated as intuitively grasped, and they were content to employ the same phrases as had been employed from of old by men who could not have reached their lofty conceptions. Stade might have perceived that in referring to Ezekiel's belief that God left the Temple before Jerusalem was destroyed, he was refuting his own argument; or would he, for example, infer from the words in an exilian psalm, "How shall we sing Jahaveh's song in a strange land?" (Ps. cxxxvii. 4), that even at that late period the Israelites still believed that their national God was confined to Palestine? If the prophets of Israel ever attained to a conception of a God who was everywhere present, spiritual, and unique, they had attained it in Ezekiel's time in the captivity. To make this prophet hold the crude idea said to be held by pre-prophetic men, that the deity dwelt in a certain sanctuary in the limited sense described, is to reduce

the whole reasoning to absurdity, and to make the tracing of development impossible.

It is no doubt true that certain places were to the ancient Israelite more sacred than others, and there can be no doubt that superstitious reverence was paid by the ignorant and carnal-minded to places and things. We are not, however, inquiring as to the superstitions of the common people, but as to the truth that had been made known to the teachers and guides of the nation. For that matter, we have not yet outgrown a certain reverence for places associated with great historical or religious events, and what Stade calls the priestly tradition is just as likely, in the circumstances, to be a true account of the matter as the one which he gives. A people who already had, according to Stade's own admission, a knowledge of a God who was everywhere, and who could help anywhere, was quite likely to regard with special reverence such places as had been the scene of critical events, or striking displays of power; and this in itself was not and could not be reprobated. The transition, however, from pious association and veneration to superstitious regard, is very easy among an unreflecting people; and the same Biblical writers who record the events which made certain spots sacred, tell us also how these very places became the headquarters of idolatry. Had the prophets known that the worshippers of Jahaveh merely appropriated old heathen shrines, they would not have omitted to mention it. Neither do they give the least hint that the sacred places of the Hebrews were so regarded because they were

originally the burial-places of Hebrew or Canaanite heroes, although the fact, if it were a fact, could scarcely have been without a trace in the national recollection.

Stade also makes a great deal of the awe felt by the Israelite at the thunder, which was God's voice, the importance attached to dreams, and so forth, taking all these as so many indications of a primitive nature-worship. But admitting here, also, the necessary imperfection of language to express religious conceptions, and admitting that people of simple believing hearts used language of the most infantile character, it is to be observed that the feelings he speaks of are consistent with conceptions of God of a most spiritual kind. The beliefs of men like Lord Bacon and Sir Thomas Browne, not to mention others, should make us very careful in our reasoning here; and in point of fact, the "superstitions" even of the popular conceptions of Israel do not exceed those to be found in the Christian centuries. If, with the conviction that the God whom they worshipped controlled the world of nature as well as the world of man, the early Israelites heard His voice in the thunder, and trembled before His presence in the storm, why should we call this an old belief in a nature-God? It is quite as reasonable to call it an inborn belief in a God of nature; and there are yet not a few who believe in such a God, although Renan would persuade us that such a God is a fiction. If, again, they felt His presence particularly near in the silent night, and recognised His commings with their spirits in dreams, it is

just as reasonable to regard these convictions as part of the human consciousness that man has a close relation to the unseen, as to say that they are remnants of a belief that every bush or tree or stone harboured a divinity. It is now, I think, admitted by the most sober students of anthropology, that even the lowest forms of fetishism rest upon and are the outcome of a recognition by the human spirit of a spirit above man and nature, and that the presence of crude conceptions or superstitious practices in the midst of a certain age does not by any means give the key to the understanding of that whole age. Christian countries form the best field for the study of the rudest and grossest superstitions. And if it be said that these are the traces of an older naturalistic faith, the question arises, How old must they be if eighteen centuries of Christian civilisation have not rooted them out?¹ The main point is: their presence does not prove that a purer faith, a less superstitious religion, has not been taught and acknowledged at an earlier stage.

In the face of all that is advanced to prove the low stage of pre-prophetic religion in Israel, we may argue thus: Down to the close of Israel's national existence, we find a struggle going on between a spiritual religion and the most material conceptions: and, at the first appearance of written prophecy, we find the same, with reproof of the carnal-minded for falling away from a higher faith. Therefore the struggle may have been going on at

¹ For some curious illustrations, see Arthur Mitchell's 'The Past in the Present' (1880).

a period long antecedent; at all events, it is not yet proved that it began with the prophets whose writings have come down to us. I believe that an unprejudiced view of all the evidence will lead to the conclusion that, as the existence of narrow and sensuous views is attested by historians and prophets alike, so history and prophecy are alike unintelligible without admitting the presence at the same time of a better and purer faith.

Finally, however, we have, it seems to me, a sure mode of testing the conclusions drawn on this precarious method of reasoning. If these animistic and fetishistic conceptions lingered on till the time of the Jahavist, and found embodiment in his stories, we ought to find clear indications of them in other writings that belong to about the same period, and to be able to test them by statements of a more decisive nature. Critical writers, it is true, do not give us much latitude in our selection of authorities. Still we have some undoubted productions of the time, or near it, when these nature conceptions are said to have been prevalent; and if we find in them a mode of speaking and thinking which is opposed to the theory, we are entitled to check the lower by the higher, and to accept the Biblical account that by the time in question a knowledge of a much higher kind had been attained. Take the song of Deborah itself. Not only does it give no countenance to the modern view, unless by a strained turning of exalted poetic diction into flat prose, but its whole tenor and tone show that the tribes at that time had a much worthier conception of their

national God. Modern critics will scarcely admit any psalm to have come from David; but there is one, the 18th, having its counterpart in 2 Sam. xxii., which is often appealed to in support of the low tone of pre-prophetic religion, and which most critics would accept as genuine. This psalm, as has just been hinted, contains some highly figurative and poetical language (vv. 6-16), which has been eagerly seized upon to show that at the time the psalm was composed Jahaveh was regarded as a nature-God, riding upon a cherub, breathing forth fire and smoke, shooting forth lightnings as arrows from His bow, and so forth. But the psalm contains also language of a less poetical and more unequivocal character, and it is surely safe criticism to interpret the more obscure by the light of the more evident. It may be put to any one of sober sense whether the expressions that occur in verses 16 and onwards are compatible with the theory we are considering. There is here no difficulty in seeing the standpoint of the writer: "As for God, His way is perfect: the word of Jahaveh is tried; He is a buckler to all those that trust in Him. For who is God save Jahaveh? or who is a rock save our God?" (vv. 30, 31). Such expressions cannot be toned down into a belief in a mere storm-God; on the contrary, those other expressions, of a highly poetical kind, must be taken to be in harmony with this higher tone, and therefore given up as proofs of an animistic or fetishistic character of religious conception at this period.

Then we have the books of the earliest writing prophets, Amos and Hosea; and Stade actually tries

to base an argument for his theory on statements of these prophets, although he positively rejects their testimony to a purer faith in the times before them. And what does his argument from Amos amount to? The prophet speaks of the God of Dan and the God of Beersheba (viii. 14); and therefore it was part of the acknowledged religion of that time to regard the Deity as localised at various centres. Now it is to be noticed that Amos, in the passage appealed to, is reproofing those who use such expressions as apostate, showing, no doubt, that the popular conception was at fault, but giving no proof that this aberration represented the accepted religion. And then, as to the prophets having carried over the localising tendency, and confined Jahaveh's residence to Jerusalem, it may be put to any sane person whether the prophet, who opens his book with the words, "Jahaveh shall roar from Zion, and utter His voice from Jerusalem" (Amos i. 2), and who also ascribes to Jahaveh the bringing of the Philistines from Caphtor and the Syrians from Kir, as well as the Israelites from Egypt (Amos ix. 7), could possibly have thought of Jahaveh as confined within a chest in the Temple, or even limited to Jerusalem as a dwelling-place; or whether the prophet Isaiah, who saw "Jahaveh sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and His train filled the temple" (Isa. vi. 1), had not yet got beyond a bodily conception of Israel's God.

If, then, witnesses on whom we rely, clearly hold different conceptions from those ascribed to men who are almost their contemporaries, we must either con-

clude that the lower views, if they are proved to be there, are not to be taken as held by the best of the nation, or that they are wrongly ascribed to those to whom they are imputed. Seeing that the higher views are expressed in the actual words of the Biblical writers, while the lower are only inferred from doubtful expressions or metaphorical language, a sober criticism must reject the inference which Stade would draw. Moreover, when Stade finds the most primitive conceptions existing side by side with the most advanced ideas, one is disposed to ask what is the value of all the critical processes which profess to be able to separate the component parts of our documents, and to assign the different elements to different periods on the ground of the development of thought which they exhibit? Even if we considered that he had successfully proved that these notions of an animistic or fetishistic character are fairly deducible from the so-called Jahavistic source, seeing that they are so divergent from the conceptions of the writing prophets, the conclusion, on critical grounds, ought to be that these stories of the Jahavist are much older than the eighth century. Stade thinks himself capable of determining on grounds of higher and lower tone in speaking of Jahaveh, that the stories of the patriarchs, being of milder aspect, are later than those of the book of Judges. How much earlier, on his own mode of reasoning, ought both to be than the writings of Amos and Hosea!

CHAPTER IX.

PRE-PROPHETIC RELIGION CONTINUED—VISIBLE REPRESENTATIONS OF THE DEITY.

The calf-worship considered, as to the source from which it came, and as to the regard in which it was held—Arguments of Vatke and Kuenen from history and from prophetic books—Elijah and Elisha—Amos—Dr. Davidson's statement—Argument drawn from the ephod—Meaning of the word, and its alleged use to signify an image—Gideon's ephod—Micah and the Danites—Vatke's account of the ephod—Kuenen's contradictory accounts—The whole argument uncertain—Stade's pruning-knife—"An altar in the land of Egypt and a pillar by its border"—A passage in Hosea examined.

WE have next to consider the proofs brought forward to show that the Israelites, like the neighbouring nations, were in the habit of making visible representations of their national God, and considered it no aberration from their ancestral faith to do so. On this line of argument, reliance is particularly placed upon such facts as the practice of calf-worship, the use and veneration of the ephod, and various considerations drawn from the prophetic and historical writings. These we must therefore consider in detail.

I. As to the calf-worship, Kuenen says confidently:

“Jahveh was worshipped in the shape of a young bull. It may not be doubted that the bull-worship was really the worship of Jahveh.”¹ The account given of the making of the golden calf in the wilderness (Exod. xxxii. 8, 23), and the setting up of calves in the northern kingdom (1 Kings xii. 28), show plainly enough that there was something in this form or accompaniment of worship, which not only did not shock the religious sense of the mass of the people, but even commended itself to them as fitting and lawful. The question is, Was it part and parcel of the ancestral faith and worship, to such a degree that the preservers of the true Jahaveh tradition saw in it no defection from the severity of that religion? To arrive at a solution of this question, we must inquire, (*a*) on the one hand, from what source the calf-worship came—whether, that is to say, it is a remnant of old pre-Mosaic or even pre-Abrahamic superstition cropping up at a later time, or whether it came along with and as part of the Israelite belief in Jahaveh, or finally, whether it was borrowed and incorporated into their own religion from the religion of some other people; and (*b*) on the other hand, whether it is formally approved of or not reprobated by those who in the most special manner stood forth as representatives of the true Jahaveh worship.

(*a*) As to the origin of the calf-worship, there is much to be said in favour of the view that the Israelites became familiar with it in Egypt, and brought it with them as an inheritance of degrada-

¹ *Relig. of Israel* (Eng. tr.), vol. i. p. 235.

tion from that country. The Old Testament writers do not say that it was borrowed from Egypt—indeed they do not tell us whence it came—but there remain the two facts, that it appeared first in the history immediately after the exodus, and that Jero-boam I., who set it up in the northern kingdom, had lived for some time in Egypt and had a patron in the Pharaoh of his time. Moreover, we find even as late as Ezekiel the firm tradition of an early corruption of Israelite faith with the superstitions of Egypt. In several passages that prophet speaks of the “idols of Egypt” (xx. 7, 8) as having had a sinister influence on Israel at the time of the exodus; and of the whoredoms in Egypt committed in the nation’s youth (xxiii. 3, 8, 19, 21). In the same way, in the parting address of Joshua, the gods which their fathers served beyond the river are classed with those which they served in Egypt as corruptions to be put away (Josh. xxiv. 14). It is true that in these passages the worship of the calf or the ox is not expressly mentioned; but when it is remembered that the city of On, in which the ox Mnevis was worshipped, lay in Goshen or on its borders,¹ the coincidence of the appearance of the calf-worship immediately after the exodus² with these references to Egyptian idolatry, is very striking and suggestive. Gramberg, for example, who derived the calf-

¹ Ebers in Riehm’s *Handwörterbuch*, Art. On, p. 1111 f. Comp. p. 529, Art. Gosen.

² It may be observed in passing, that modern critics, as a rule, find no difficulty in accepting as a historical fact the making of the golden calf in the desert, although they will not admit that the tabernacle was also made in the wilderness. Kuenen is consistent in saying (*Rel. Isr.*, I, p. 235) “it is doubtful whether the bull-worship in the desert is historical.”

worship from Egypt, explained its prevalence in Israel after this fashion: The worship of Apis, once borrowed by a people prone to a visible cultus, maintained itself all along as a private and unofficial worship, side by side with the ritual connected with the ark. Jeroboam, seeing that the Jerusalem Court had possession of the ark, and that the Temple ritual had no image, made the worship of Jahavek Apis the official cultus in his new state, this arrangement being favoured by the fact that Dan was already the seat of an image-worship of Jahaveh, though not perhaps of the calf-worship.¹ There is the obvious objection to this theory, that a people just delivered from bondage to a foreign yoke was not likely to set up as a symbol of the God that delivered them the very image of the god of their oppressors. Moreover, although the Egyptians carried about images of bulls in sacred processions, yet the object of their veneration was a live bull, Apis. The difficulty indeed is so great, that we are rather led to believe that the calf, whatever else it was to Israel, was not the actual symbol of any Egyptian deity, but was adopted as a distinctive symbol of their own god by a people whose religious sense had been so utterly debauched by residence in Egypt, that they considered *some* visible representation of the deity necessary. Their long sojourn among a people whose religious service was so overlaid with symbolism and imagery could not have been without its effect in this direction; just as there are in the ritual and other laws of the Hebrews very striking

¹ Gramberg, *Krit. Gesch. d. Religionsideen des A. T.* (1829), i. p. 444.

resemblances to the customs of Egypt—in the Urim and Thummim, for example.

The readiness, nay eagerness, with which the people in the desert accepted the golden calf as the symbol of the God that had brought them out of Egypt, the ease with which the worship of the calves was introduced by Jeroboam, and the fact that in both cases a calf or young bull was taken as a symbol, are thought by some to have a deeper root. The golden calf in the desert could scarcely have been a sudden thought; and we must either think of Israel having become thoroughly impregnated with Egyptian idolatrous notions, or having even in their own blood, so to speak, a leaning in that direction.

It is still more difficult to explain Jeroboam's step as a simple imitation of the gods of Egypt. He could hardly, one would think, have appealed to Aaron's act as a precedent; although, indeed, the people in the desert is represented as using the same language as Jeroboam (comp. Exod. xxxii. 4, 8, with 1 Kings xii. 28). Nor could his action have well commended itself to the acceptance of a people who had ceased to have sympathy with such visible representations of the deity from the time of the exodus. Hence some of the soberer critics of modern times¹ believe that the representation of the deity in this form was an old Hebrew idea, or one of those ideas common to the Hebrews, with their Semitic kindred and other nations. Against this view it may be urged that in the stories of

¹ See their names in König's *Hauptprobleme*, p. 57, from which, also, a good deal of what is here stated is derived.

Abraham and the other patriarchs there is no reference to calf or ox worship as remaining elements of pre-Abrahamic religion, although teraphim are mentioned as remaining in the family of Jacob. Yet since Abraham is represented as coming forth from an idolatrous land, since the symbolism of bulls was common in Assyria, and since the Israelites took to this form of representation so easily, there is a good deal of support for the view that it rests on an old inherent conception.

We must not ignore the fact that there is ever in the human mind a craving for visible forms to express religious conceptions; and history shows that this tendency does not disappear with the acceptance nor even with the constant recognition of pure spiritual truth. We need not be astonished at Israel, at the time in question, manifesting the tendency, nor charge them with a crass materialistic idolatry in so doing. They wished, let us suppose, to have a visible representation of strength, and they could not picture the abstract idea of *Abir*, Mighty, in a more obvious manner than by an image of the *Abbir*, the powerful Ox.¹ That it was an image of an ox, and not of a human being (although they used the most marked anthropomorphic language in speaking of God) is to me a strong reason for supposing that the calf or ox was not meant to be an actual image, but only a symbol, of God. Does not, indeed, the making of such images, as unlike as possible to the form in which deity can be conceived, prove that the initial im-

¹ See above, chap. vii. p. 188.

pulse to image-making rests on a more spiritual recognition of the Godhead? It is only when the instinctive impulse has stilled down, and the mass of ignorant people rest in forms, that the εἰκῶν becomes a charm or even a god. Baudissin says:¹ "As the great and mighty of the earth are often represented under the figure of an ox, and as especially the horn of the ox is an image of strength, so the latter image is not disdained as a representation of the power and salvation proceeding from Jahaveh;" and this consideration may furnish at least some explanation of the ideas on whose awakening in the hearts of the common people those who introduced the calf-worship could count as auxiliaries in its adoption.²

This view, however, differs widely from that which some of the more advanced critics of the history have put forward—viz., that the calf or ox worship was part of the authorised Mosaic Jahaveh religion. On either of the suppositions that the calf-worship was borrowed from Egypt, or that it was a primitive inherent tendency, there is no inconsistency with the Biblical theory, which traces idolatry to Egypt, and also declares that the "fathers" of Israel before Abraham served other gods. But the idea that the calf-worship is really part, or the same as, the worship of Jahaveh, is quite opposed to the view of prophets and historians. We must, therefore, examine its claims more closely.

(b) We shall look presently at those formal state-

¹ Herzog-Plitt, *Realencyklopädie*, vii. p. 395 f., Art. Kalb.

² So König, *Hauptprobleme*, p. 58.

ments of prophetic writers which are urged in support of the position. In the meantime we turn to the considerations drawn from history which are said to warrant it. Vatke's general line of argument is, that Moses could not have forbidden Israel to represent Jahaveh in visible form; because even the ark of the covenant with its cherubim must have led to such visible representation; because the prohibition of images in the Decalogue is a later outgrowth of the polemic against idol-worship, a result of the gradual and later perception of the spiritual nature of God; and because the absence of opposition to idol-worship which we find even in late times is a proof that Moses could never have prohibited it.¹ Kuenen argues very much on the same lines.² "The priests and worshippers of the golden bull," he says, "believed that they were worshipping Jahaveh Himself. Jeroboam I., too, the founder of the temples at Dan and Beth-el, calls the image made by him, 'Thy [Israel's] God, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt;' had it been possible to interpret the golden bull as a symbol of another deity, the narrator who tells us this detail would not have described it as a representation of Jahveh." Then, after rejecting the idea that the calf-worship was borrowed from Egypt, he says:³ "It is much more reasonable to suppose that the ten tribes, who rebelled against Solomon's extortions, and his leaning towards foreign manners and customs, introduced a genuinely national and ancient Israelitish

¹ Vatke, *Biblische Theologie* (1835), pp. 233-235, 266-272, 398, 403, 483.

² *Relig. of Israel* (Eng. tr.), vol. i. p. 235.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 236.

worship. For this reason, therefore, it is very probable that Jahveh had already been worshipped under the same form during the period of the Judges."¹ He then proceeds to refer to the symbols in and around the temple, which "remind us of the bull-worship, and are evidently related to it," the four *horns* of the great altar, and the twelve *oxen* supporting the brazen sea or laver. Elsewhere² he argues that the belief that Jahaveh Himself was present in the ark gives another proof that he was regarded as cognisable by sense. He also shares Vatke's view that the prohibition of image-worship in the Decalogue comes in awkwardly,³ breaking the connection of the words, and thus betraying itself as a late addition; and in confirmation, he refers to the making of the brazen serpent, which was worshipped down to the days of Hezekiah.

But all these considerations are singularly inadequate to bear the weighty inferences based upon them. The cherubim, whatever else they may have been, are never hinted at as representations of Jahaveh, who "sits above" them. And the idea that the Deity was believed to reside in the ark is one of those precarious inferences from an old presumed animistic belief, which are not warranted by any positive evidence to be drawn from the documents. As to the prohibition of image-worship in the second commandment, this would most likely suggest itself to a lawgiver in the position of Moses, in view of the idolatrous practices of the heathen nations, and

¹ So also Duhm, *Theol. d. Propheten*, p. 47, Anm. 4.
Relig. of Israel, vol. I. p. 233.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 287.

even Kuenen will hardly deny that Moses had attained to the notion of a spiritual God. For in one passage,¹ after saying that Moses may have shared in the ideas of a somewhat sensuous character held as to the ark, he says if Moses believed that the ark was the abode of Jahveh, and accordingly offered the common sacrifices before it,

‘then he himself certainly did not erect an image of Jahveh, much less ordain the use of one. We are inclined to go a step further. May we not conclude from the fact that Moses attached so much importance to the ark, that the images of Jahveh did not fully harmonise with his conception of Jahveh’s nature and character? If he had really received a deep impression of Jahveh’s majesty, and of the vast difference between Him and the ‘other gods,’ is it not extremely natural that he should not have been altogether satisfied with the image of the bull, which was immediately connected with the usual nature-worship, and led men again and again to sink into it? The conclusion is easily drawn. Moses did not definitely and expressly forbid the use of Jahveh images. But still less did he promote it. He even opposed it indirectly by raising the ark to be Israel’s central sanctuary. The prohibition, ‘thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image,’ was not decreed by him, but at a much later period, although it was done in conformity with his spirit.’

One would think that this was an ample admission that image-worship is not of Mosaic origin, and therefore not a part of the genuine Jahveh religion. As for the brazen serpent, Kuenen himself does not lay much stress on it, for on his view the account of it cannot be accepted as historical; and even if the Israelites paid reverence to it, this does not prove that Moses, if he made it, set it up for that purpose.

¹ *Relig. of Israel* vol. i. 289 f.

The argument drawn from the symbolism about the Temple fails also to establish the point, for it is confronted by one hard fact which makes for the opposite conclusion. Both Vatke and Gramberg admit that one great feature distinguishing the worship of Jerusalem from that of the northern kingdom was the absence from the Temple of any image of Jahaveh. The fact is the more significant that so much symbolism can exist, and seems to emphasise the point conceded above by Kuenen, that Moses did not promote image-worship. Kuenen also admits¹ that the ark stood where an image of Jahaveh should have stood, but does not pretend that there was any attempt to erect such an image. On the contrary he says, "We are nowhere told that Jahveh was worshipped under any visible form in the Temple at Jerusalem; it is much more likely that from the very beginning that Temple was dedicated to the service of the invisible Jahveh."² He tries indeed to make out that such images existed at other places where Jahaveh was worshipped. "The same prophets," he says, "whose complaints of the heathen practices of their countrymen we have just noticed, testify at the same time to the fact that Jahveh was universally honoured and served. Thus it is very possible, and even probable, that some of these graven images, the use of which they deplored, were images of Jahveh."³ Wellhausen also says plainly,⁴ that "images of the deity were exhibited in all the three places (viz., Jerusalem, Beth-el, and Dan), and indeed in

¹ *Relig. of Israel*, vol. I. p. 236.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 80.

² *Ibid.*, p. 80.

⁴ *Hist. of Israel*, p. 406.

every place where a house of God was found." In this they are practically following Vatke, who reasoned,¹ from Isa. ii. 8, that if the land of Judah was full of idols, the idol-worshippers could not have omitted from their list the greatest or one of the greatest of their gods, Jahaveh himself. It is a mere guess, destitute of any proof, and, in face of the striking fact in regard to the Temple, it is in the highest degree improbable. We should, on Vatke's reasoning, have concluded that if Jahaveh was to be represented freely by an image at local shrines, *a fortiori*, he would be so represented in the Temple. Only, the facts are against this reasoning, and much reasoning of a like kind.

But it is said there are direct positive proofs that a worship of Jahaveh by visible images was common and recognised by the best authorities. Of such proofs one is the passage in the book of Judges, in which a grandson of Moses is mentioned as exercising idolatrous priestly functions at Dan. To this we shall recur immediately in speaking of the ephod. Let us now look at other proofs based upon the practices of the prophets themselves or to be deduced from their writings.

It is maintained by the modern critics that, as in the legends of Elijah and Elisha we find no mention of a polemic against the calf-worship of the northern kingdom, we may take that as an indication that these prophets did not look upon it as inconsistent with the true Jahaveh religion. As for the words of Ahijah the Shilonite, whom the writer of Kings

¹ *Bibl. Theol.*, p. 483.

introduces as denouncing Jeroboam for making "other gods and molten images" (1 Kings xiv. 9), these are set down as "the dressing up of the pragmatic view of a later age"; and the imprecation of the unnamed prophet introduced in the same book (chap. xiii. 1 ff.) is easily got rid of for a similar reason. Letting these references pass, however, as contained in a book written long after the time to which we confine ourselves, we take the admission of Vatke that the legends of the prophets Elijah and Elisha are, comparatively speaking, correct. Now the absence from them of all polemic against the calves may be admitted to be a very striking circumstance, since it is the case that such polemic formed a prominent and constant element of prophetic preaching.¹ But in the first place, there were many abuses in the northern kingdom about which we hear nothing from Elijah and Elisha. It is certainly remarkable that we do not find either of these prophets at Beth-el or Dan, the seats of the calf-worship, where we might naturally have expected them, had they regarded these as the seats of the true Jahaveh-worship of the time. The fact of their keeping aloof from these places, and forming perhaps, as many have supposed, centres of religious activity around which the piously minded of their nation could gather and keep clear of the prevailing contamination, would tell against the idea that they recognised the worship of Jeroboam's sanctuaries as genuine. But above all, these prophets had even a harder duty to perform than to rebuke the

¹ Vatke, *Bibl. Theol.* p. 400 f.

calf-worship. That worship, degraded as it was, *called itself* a worship of Jahaveh, and, from Jeroboam's days, may have kept the recognition of the national God of Israel in a way prominently before the people. But in the days of Ahab and his queen Jezebel, when Elijah flourished, it came to be a question whether Jahaveh or the Phœnician Baal was to receive recognition as the national god. To this great question Elijah braced himself, and sought to rouse the undivided co-operation of every Israelite. When once that danger passed away, we see his successors directing themselves to the purification of the Jahaveh religion, which had gained the day. The two crises are very much like those which Europe passed through in its religious history—first the struggle as to whether the Crescent or the Cross should be the recognised symbol of superiority, and then the Reformation of religion from its own abuses in the sixteenth century. For, as has just been said, the earliest writing prophets¹ are found denouncing the calf-worship as vigorously as Elijah rebuked the worship of Baal. It is not even denied, it cannot well be denied, by the most advanced writers that Hosea at least takes up this attitude to the worship of the calves; and his position is so well marked in this respect that modern critical writers beat about the bush, but in vain, for any adequate explanation of this advance over the non-writing or acting prophets who immediately precede him. All they are able to suggest is, that in the course of the centuries succeeding Jeroboam I.

¹ Amos iv. 4, v. 5, vii. 9 ff., viii. 14; Hosea viii. 5, xlii. 2.

idoltrous elements had got incorporated with the primitive Jahaveh calf-worship—elements such as the “kissing” of the images referred to in Hosea xiii. 2, 1 Kings xix. 18—or that the worship of Jahaveh and the idols had got freely combined.¹ This mode of evading the difficulty is of a piece with the explanation why Amos and Hosea have left writings while none of the prophets before them wrote anything, that “in the course of a century a non-writing had developed into a literary age.” The contrast is too sharp to be slurred over in this way. From all that is recorded of Elijah, we may more reasonably conclude that if he does not wage polemic against the calves, it is because his polemic was directed against much more than that form of idolatry.

In regard to Amos a very singular position has been taken by many modern writers. Since this prophet does not expressly reprobate the calf-worship, it has been taken for granted that he, too, like Elijah, saw nothing wrong in it. This view, says Dr. A. B. Davidson, has been repeated so often,² that it may be called traditional; and I will allow Dr. Davidson in his own way to exhibit its superficiality. “It is questionable,” he says, “if this representation be true, even in the letter. Several passages are hard to reconcile with it, as this: ‘When I visit the transgressions of Israel upon him I will also visit the altars of Beth-el; and the horns of

¹ See Vatke, p. 401 f.; Kuenen, *Relig. of Israel*, i. 78 f.; Stade in his *Ztsch. für die Altliche Wissenschaft*, 1883, p. 9 f.

² See, *e.g.*, Cheyne on Hosea (*Cambridge Bible for Schools*), p. 31; Robertson Smith, *Prophets*, p. 175; Stade, *Geschichte*, vol. i. p. 579.

the altar shall be cut off, and fall to the ground' (iii. 14);¹ or the ironical invitation, 'Go to Beth-el, and transgress' (iv. 4); or this, 'They that swear by the sin of Samaria (probably the calf of Beth-el), and that swear, as thy God, O Dan, liveth, shall fall, and never rise up again (viii. 14); or the graphic picture of the worshippers gathered together in the temple at Beth-el, which Jehovah smites and brings down upon their heads. These passages appear to carry in them a formal repudiation of the calves. Minds may differ, but if the prophet's language be not a verbal protest against the calf-worship, it is because it is a great deal more; it is a protest which goes much deeper than the calves, and is directed to something behind them. The calves and the whole ritual service, as it was practised, were but symptoms of that which gave offence to the prophet, which was the spirit of the worship, the mind of the worshippers, the conception of the Deity which they had in worshipping, and to which they offered their worship.²

II. Let us see now the argument drawn from the use of the ephod. It is argued that the word ephod, besides being employed to denote the breast-covering of the priest, was also the name of an image, and that such an image was set up by Gideon at Ophrah, and used by David for worship. It is certainly at the first sight remarkable, if this be the case, that

¹ Shall we conclude, perhaps, from iii. 14, where the horns of the altar are to be cut off, that in the view of Amos the altar itself is to be allowed to stand? Wellhausen reasons in this way from a passage of Isaiah, where molten and graven images are condemned, that the local sanctuaries in which these are contained are not to be included in the condemnation.—Wellh., *Hist.*, pp. 25, 46. See below, chap. xvii. p. 450.

² *Expositor*, third series, vol. v. p. 175.

the same word should denote two things so very different, and it is important to determine if possible which of the two significations is the primary one, and how one word could have come to have the two senses. There is one passage (Isa. xxx. 22) in which a derivative of the word ephod (*'aphuddah*) is applied not to the dress of the priest, but to some part of an image; and the use of that word will perhaps guide us to the truth. In that verse we read: "Ye shall defile the overlaying of thy graven images of silver, and the plating (*'aphuddath*) of thy molten images of gold" (R.V.) Here the parallelism shows that the word in question does not denote the image itself, but a part of it, answering in the other half of the verse to "overlaying." If we render this word "coating," it would be an obvious derivative of ephod in the sense of "coat" or dress. In fact the same derivative is used (Exod. xxviii. 6 ff.), when directions are given for the making of the priestly ephod. It was to be of "gold, of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen, the work of the cunning workman;" and (in ver. 8) it is directed that "the curious girdle of the ephod [according to A.V., or, as better expressed in R.V., the cunningly woven band], which is upon it, shall be of the same." The ephod here described was evidently of rich material, provided with a girdle for tying it, and the verb from which the noun comes is actually employed (Exod. xxix. 5) to denote the girding on of the dress. Vatke, indeed, endeavoured to make out¹ that as, on his view, the whole account

¹ Bibl. Theol., p. 270. Anm.

of the arrangements for the giving of the oracle by the high priest is late, we cannot draw the conclusion that the ephod was originally and exclusively part of the priestly dress. But he has himself to admit that the wearing of a linen ephod is distinctly mentioned in the books of Samuel, where we have the boy Samuel (1 Sam. ii. 18), a whole company of priests at Shiloh (1 Sam. xxii. 18), and David, who was not a priest (2 Sam. vi. 14), wearing ephods. Therefore in none of the passages quoted—not even that from Isaiah—is the word applied to an image as such, though it may be applied to the covering, with which, in the form and with perhaps an imitation of the magnificence of the priestly ephod, an image might be overlaid.

But it is said that the ephod placed by Gideon in his city Ophrah (Judges viii. 27) could have been nothing but an image, for it was made of the gold that was taken from the Midianites. In the first place, however, we are told that “the weight of the golden earrings that he requested was a thousand and seven hundred shekels of gold; beside the crescents, and the pendants, and the purple raiment that was on the kings of Midian, and beside the chains that were about their camels’ necks.” Here, though the weight of gold is certainly great, there is also *purple raiment* that was on the kings, employed along with the metal in providing the ephod. I do not know that we are bound to conclude that every ounce of the gold and every inch of the purple was employed in the actual construction of the ephod. Whatever was made, was a thing of magnificence,

and implied costly surroundings; but it is not by all this proved that ephod means an image. It may have been merely a coat of extraordinary magnificence, so heavy that it could stand alone, as we say; it may have been placed upon an image; but it was an ephod, and an ephod, as far as the usage of the language tells us, was a coat or covering. The statement that follows may, of course, be taken as the remark of the pious narrator of a later time, that it became a snare; but there must be truth in his words that Israel went a-whoring after it—viz., that it was sought after as a religious instrument. The snare may have been this: As the ephod was the dress of the priest, and as the priest wearing it gave forth utterances for the guidance of the people, the superstition of the time may have supposed that from such a magnificent ephod, kept by a man like Gideon, who still desired that Jahaveh directly should rule over Israel (viii. 23), guidance would be given in cases of difficulty. We are not bound to make Gideon a man of perfect understanding of such things; he may have thought that his ephod was as good at least, and able to furnish as good guidance, as those employed at the decaying sanctuary of Shiloh. The only point we are concerned with now is to show that the ephod was not an image representing the national God of Israel. Some more light is thrown on this subject by the story of Micah (Judges xvii., xviii.) In that story we read that besides the “graven image and the molten image” the “man Micah had an house of gods, and he made an ephod, and teraphim, and consecrated

one of his sons, who became his priest." Here also the ephod may be—most probably is—nothing else than the priestly dress. The anxiety of Micah to have a regularly qualified Levite to be his priest comes out at every step in the narrative; and the confidence both on his part and on the part of the Danites that such a priest would give unerring guidance, is quite childlike (chaps. xvii. 10-13; xviii. 4-6, 19, 24, 30). As the priest was the wearer of the ephod, the providing of an ephod necessitated the procuring of a priest. For want of a better, Micah sets apart his son to perform the priestly functions, but as soon as he can lay hands on a genuine Levite he instals him into the office; and the direction sought from him by the Danites is exactly the kind of guidance which the priest wearing an ephod was in the habit of giving. In any case we should not, of course, take Micah and the wandering Danites as the representatives of the true Jahaveh religion even in that rude age, nor regard the conduct even of Gideon as justifiable. Yet we do not find in these passages any proof that the ephod was taken to be a symbol of Jahaveh, even by Micah with his house of gods, much less that Gideon regarded his ephod, whatever its shape, as the embodiment of the national God who had made him victorious over the Midianites. In connection with the story of Micah, it is mentioned (xviii. 30) that "Jonathan, the son of Gershom, the son of Manasseh, he and his sons, were priests to the tribe of Dan until the day of the captivity of the land" [or of the ark]. It is well known that the name Manas-

sch has been produced in this passage by the insertion of a letter to disguise the fact that the name was originally Moses. And much has been made of the fact that a grandson of the lawgiver himself is here represented as at the head of the idolatrous worship of the Danites—a proof, as it is taken to be, that there was nothing in the original Mosaic religion opposed to the practice of image-worship. Not only so; but the case of this misguided youth, though it is specially noted, and though it occurred in a degenerate time, is made an example of the rule that was common throughout the land. So Robertson Smith says:¹ “In many places a priesthood, claiming kinship with Moses, administered the sacred oracle as his successors.” It seems to me that this whole story of the Danites is given by the historian not because it was a sample of what was common, but because there was something uncommon and abnormal in the proceeding. The various judges whose exploits are recorded are not specimens of the ordinary Israelite of this period, nor were men all up and down the country killing multitudes with the jawbone of an ass, and routing hordes of Midianites with lamps and trumpets. And why go so far afield as Dan, if the writer wished to tell us what was done in Moses’ name and by his authority? Dan was in historic time the seat of a worship which was particularly obnoxious and vigorously denounced by the prophets; and the writer of the story in the book of Judges traces the idolatry back to the time at which it was set up, and perhaps, in giving the

¹ Prophets, p. 38.

name of Moses' grandson, hints at one reason why it had its evil prestige—viz., that it could boast of the priesthood of men of Mosaic descent. So far from taking these incidents as types of the everyday life and action of the nation, I would be disposed to think that the writer, like most early writers, singled out for record things that were uncommon, leaving ordinary events unrecorded. The very things in regard to which we search the Old Testament in vain for information, are precisely those that must have been so regular that they were not thought worthy of notice.

I do not think it will commend this view of the ephod to the ordinary reader of the Bible to be told, as Vatke tells us, that Gideon's ephod had "probably the form of an ox, or that of combination of an ox and a man;"¹ and also that David's ephod "had in all probability also the form of an ox."² The ephod symbolism is, no doubt, found connected with the calf-worship, although in the mention of the calves there is not a word about the ephod, nor is there any hint of Gideon having got the idea of his ephod from Egypt or elsewhere. But if David used an ephod which was in the form of an ox, it is difficult to see in what respect Jeroboam's setting up of calves should have been a deviation from normal Israelitish worship, or even a distinction of the northern kingdom. There recurs again the admitted fact that in Solomon's temple there was no image of Jahaveh; and it is simply incredible that Solomon should have made such an advance upon his father

¹ *Bibl. Theol.*, p. 268.

² *Ibid.*, p. 401.

David without the writer's ever giving the least hint of it. The evidence in support of this view of the ephod cannot be very strong, since Kuenen gives two divergent accounts of it. Thus at one place¹ he says it is "very probable" that Jahaveh had been worshipped under the form of a bull during the period of the Judges, and gives references for the statement to these cases of Gideon and Micah (Judges viii. 27, xvii. 4). And this view is adopted in his later work, 'National Religions,' in which he says,² "The old records themselves make it probable that the ephod was an *image of Jahveh*, silvered or gilt over, and perhaps so constructed that the lots could be concealed within it." In the same place, however, he gives a reference to his earlier work,³ where this very view is "decidedly to be rejected," and the opinion is given that "it is very improbable that an expression so much in use should have been employed in a double sense; and, as our preceding investigation teaches us, it is absolutely unnecessary to attach any other meaning to it than that of 'a garment worn by the priest upon his shoulders.'" And this is the conclusion of all the pothier. An Arabic saying tells of a grammarian who, "after enormous labour, explained that water meant water."

III. In this connection, we must not omit reference to the *Maçcebas* or pillars, and the *Asherim*, rendered in E. V. "groves," but probably posts or images of Astarte, which are so often reprobated by prophetic men as adjuncts of the corrupt worship. It

¹ Relig. of Israel, vol. 1. p. 236.

² National Religions, p. 82.

³ Relig. of Israel, vol. 1. p. 100.

has generally been admitted that these were some of the corruptions introduced into the pure national religion; and Vatke,¹ *e.g.*, believed that the reform of Hezekiah (2 Kings xviii. 4, 22) not only swept away the images of Jehovah, but extended also to the Maççebas and the Asheras which existed in his time (Isaiah xvii. 8). In this opinion he was followed by Kuenen² and Duhm.³ Of recent time, however, Stade has taken a step in advance, denying⁴ that the reforms of Hezekiah went beyond the destruction of the brazen serpent, and the removal of the images of Jahaveh, which, he concludes from the words of Isaiah, “must have been found in the hands of many private persons.” As for the Maççebas and Asheras, which had grown up out of the reverence for external objects, stone-worship and tree-worship—that is to say, were remnants of the old animistic religion—the prophets took no offence at them. In other words, these things were part of the authorised or undisputed religion of Israel. The passage which Vatke had relied on for his statement that these things were also removed by Hezekiah, stands, however, in Stade’s way. That passage reads (Isa. xvii. 7, 8), “In that day shall a man look unto his Maker, and his eyes shall have respect unto the Holy One of Israel. And he shall not look to the altars, the work of his hands, neither shall he have respect to that which his fingers have made, either the asherim or the sun images.” Stade’s usual critical instrument—the pruning-knife—comes to his hand; and he declares that the words “altars”

¹ *Bibl. Theol.*, p. 482.

² *Relig. of Israel*, vol. i. p. 80 ff.

³ *Theol. d. Propheten*, p. 195.

⁴ *Stade’s Ztsch.* 1883, pp. 9-14.

and "asherim" and "sun images" are interpolations by a later wordy glossator, and that the verse originally ran—"He shall not look to the work of his hands, neither shall he have respect to that which his fingers have made." It is certainly very remarkable that a mere glossator should have understood altars particularly as the work of a man's hands. The use of that word, instead of some name of a more superstitious object, is pretty good proof that Isaiah himself wrote it; and if he did, the parallelism justifies the other words in the second half of the verse. But there is another passage, in Micah v. 13 f., which also condemns these objects; and as the verses cannot be emended, they are in the block declared to belong to a later period. The verses run: "I will cut off thy graven images, and thy pillars out of the midst of thee; and thou shalt no more worship the work of thine hands. And I will pluck up thine asherim out of the midst of thee, and I will destroy thy cities." This mode of proceeding is only an example of pushing a foregone conclusion. In a case like the present, where positive statements are not numerous, and where these critics themselves have beforehand with confidence appealed to the prophetic writings as the only reliable authorities, to cut and carve them, on the *mere grounds* of the hypothesis, is the best refutation of the hypothesis itself.

But there is one passage—and it is the only one—that is adduced by one writer after another to prove that beside the altars of Jahaveh pillars were set up in His honour: "In that day there shall be an altar to

the Lord in the midst of the land of Egypt, and a pillar (Maggeba) at the border thereof to Jahaveh" (Isa. xix. 19). Let not the English reader suppose that the "border thereof" is the border of the altar; there is no doubt that it is the border of Egypt. The prophet thus foretells that in the midst of the land of Egypt there shall be an altar to the Lord; and at the border of Egypt there shall be a pillar to the Lord. The conclusion is, that close beside every altar of Jahaveh in Palestine stood also a pillar dedicated to Him; and this is the kind of argument adduced to prove that the setting up of pillars beside Jahaveh's altars was part of the recognised worship. The argument, like many more of its kind, gives proof of great ingenuity, but will hardly commend itself to sober reason as any proof at all. The prophet goes on to say, "It shall be for a sign and for a witness unto the Lord of hosts in the land of Egypt;" and what he seems to mean is, that as the altar shall be for true worship in the heart of Egypt itself, at which the Egyptians "shall worship with sacrifice and oblation, and shall vow a vow unto the Lord, and shall perform it" (v. 21), so the pillar at the border shall be a mark indicating that the whole land is devoted to the Lord. The pillar in itself was no idolatrous object; it was a memorial, or commemorative mark, and as such we frequently read of it in the early history. If superstition turned the simple usage to a wrong purpose; if, especially, the pillars set up beside Canaanite altars were imitated by the people in their aping of Canaanite idolatries, that does not prove that pillars were part of the original Jahaveh

worship, much less that they were in any sense symbols of Jahaveh Himself.

There is still another passage which is relied upon to prove that pillars, ephod, and teraphim were all together parts of the genuine Israelite religion; but if I understand the passage, it proves the very opposite of what it is adduced to support. In Hosea iii. 4 we read: "For the children of Israel shall abide many days without king, and without prince, and without sacrifice, and without pillar, and without ephod or teraphim." The passage is one of threatening, and the inference generally drawn from it is, that as the things mentioned are to be taken from Israel as a punishment, they are to be regarded as things of which they were beforetime lawfully possessed. They were, in a word, to be deprived of both political freedom and religious privileges; and as the former is denoted by king and prince, the latter is summed up in the succeeding expressions, which therefore, at Hosea's time, denoted legitimate elements of their worship. This interpretation, however, though looking plausible enough, does not satisfy the context, and leaves the passage without the point which the prophet gave to it. We have to go back to the beginning of the chapter to see what he is driving at. The prophet is instructed to take back his erring wife, the image of Israel estranged from its God; he buys her from her late paramour, and then comes the passage which explains all: "I said unto her, Thou shalt abide for me many days; thou shalt not play the harlot, and thou shalt not be any man's wife: so will I also be towards thee."

This last phrase naturally means, as it is usually expounded, that the prophet was to keep his wife both secluded from her lovers and separated from himself for many days—*i.e.*, she was brought to his house, but kept in a kind of imprisonment till she should come to a better mind. The point is, that she would neither enjoy the lawful company of her own husband nor the unlawful company of her paramours. Says Robertson Smith:¹ “In v. 3 the sense seems to be that for many days she must sit still, not finding a husband (Jer. iii. 1),—not merely, as A.V., not marrying another, but not enjoying the rights of a lawful wife at all—while at the same time Hosea is ‘toward her,’ watching over and waiting for her (the phrase is as 2 Kings vi. 11; Jer. xv. 1. Cf. Hos. i. 9).” And then comes the application: “For the children of Israel shall abide many days without king,” &c. They also should endure a time when neither would the favour of God be shown to them, nor the help of false gods avail them. And the enumeration of the things that follow should, on this interpretation, exhibit this double reference. The things are in fact arranged in pairs, and I think light at once falls upon the passage when read in this connection, each pair representing at once the true and the false, the good and the evil, of which they would be deprived—

Neither king	nor prince.
Neither sacrifice	nor pillar.
Neither ephod	nor teraphim.

¹ Prophets, p. 410.

“Afterwards,” says the prophet, “shall the children of Israel return and seek the Lord their God, and David their king.” König’s explanation¹ of the passage, which makes the whole list of possessions consist of things irregular (even the monarchy), seems forced in itself, besides failing to present the striking idea of the immediate context. Robertson Smith,² who takes sacrifice and maḡeba, ephod and teraphim, to have been “recognised as the necessary forms and instruments of the worship of Jehovah,” yet in a note makes the double reference: “So Jehovah will deal with Israel when, by destroying the state and the ordinances of worship, He breaks off all intercourse, *not only between Israel and the Baalim, but between Israel and Himself.*” There is no reason to say that the monarchy in itself was distasteful to Hosea, or that sacrifice in itself was condemned by him. But if we take the things in pairs, we get the legitimate monarchy and the bastard lordship, legitimate sacrifices and those with which the idolatrous pillars were associated, the legitimate priestly ephod and the superstitious consulting of teraphim.

¹ Hauptprobleme, p. 69.

² O.T. In Jewish Church, Lect. viii. pp. 226, 423.

CHAPTER X.

PRE-PROPHETIC RELIGION CONTINUED: MOLOCH-WORSHIP—HUMAN SACRIFICES—FIRE-WORSHIP.

Statements of Kuenen, Daumer, and Ghillany that Jahveh was originally a fire or sun god, worshipped with human sacrifices, or identified with Moloch—Semitic mode of naming deities contrasted with Aryan—Arguments for identification drawn from (1) modes of expression, fire, &c., metaphor; (2) Bamoth; (3) circumcision and offering of first-born; (4) certain records of events—e.g., offering of Isaac, Jephthah's daughter, king of Moab; (5) declarations of the prophets, Amos v. 26, Micah vi. 7, 8—“Cumulative” argument from these indications—Warning against proving too much.

KUENEN, after concluding that the bull was “an indigenous and original symbol of Jahveh,” proceeds to say:¹ “Now we know from other sources that this emblem had its place in the worship of the sun. The bull properly symbolises untamed power, especially the violence of the sun, its scorching and consuming heat. Thus Molech is represented with the head of a bull, while horns are the invariable tokens of Astarte. Therefore we certainly do not go too far in inferring from the bull-worship an original relationship between Jahveh and Molech.”

¹ Relig. of Israel, vol. i. p. 236.

It may seem to the ordinary reader of the Bible that only by extravagant freaks of criticism can such positions be maintained as the following: "Fire and Moloch worship was the ancestral, legal, and orthodox worship of the nation" of Israel.¹ "Moses never forbade human sacrifices. On the contrary, these constituted a legal and essential part of the state-worship from the earliest times down to the destruction of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah."² And it is no doubt the case that the writers from whom we quote went a greater length than more modern critical writers are disposed to do. Kuenen, *e.g.*, in reply to the question whether the Jahveh of the prophets is a counterpart to Moloch, has no hesitation in returning a negative answer. Still he fearlessly asserts that "the conception of Jahveh originally bordered upon that of Molech, or at least had many points of contact with it;"³ and that "originally Jahveh was a god of light or of the sun, and the heat of the sun and the consuming fire were considered to proceed from him, and to be ruled by him. In accordance with this, Jahveh was conceived by those who worshipped Him to be a severe being inaccessible to mankind, whom it was necessary to propitiate with sacrifices and offerings, and even with human sacrifices."⁴

In order to the clearer understanding of the bearings of this question, it is proper to remark at the outset that a broad distinction is to be observed

¹ Title-page of Daumer's *Feuer und Molochdienst der alten Hebräer*, 1842.

² Heading to p. 78 ff. of Ghillany's *Die Menschenopfer der alten Hebräer*, 1842.

³ *Relig. of Israel*, vol. i. p. 241.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 249.

between the mode of naming of their gods by most Semitic peoples and that of Aryan nations. The names given to their gods by the kindred nations in the neighbourhood of Israel had nearly all a similar signification, and were of a more comprehensive import than the usual names of the heathen divinities. We have already seen that Baal, which is the same name as the Babylonian Bel, means lord; so does Adon, which passed into Adonis. El and Elohim had a similar general meaning of power or might, as also Shaddai; and Elyon means Most High. Moloch—or, more correctly, Molech—is closely akin to the word standing for king in Hebrew, and signified ruler (perhaps originally in an abstract sense). In the same way, Chemosh seems to be derived from the idea of subduing or repressing. Such a mode of nomenclature is different from that of the Aryans, who named their deities from single natural phenomena, as fire, light, and so forth; and even although the Semitic deities were associated with natural phenomena of that kind, the names preserved their general significance, and allowed the mind of the worshipper a wider scope. So that the often-repeated dictum, *Nomina numina*, however applicable to Aryan mythology, is not found prevailing among Semitic peoples.¹ It is this peculiar feature of Semitic religion that led M. Renan to his well-known position that these nations had an instinctive leaning to monotheism; for it is plain that when a people calls its god *the ruler, the king, the most high*, there is not felt the same necessity for gods many, as if

¹ Baudissin, *Jahve et Moloch*, p. 9.

every object in nature was the abode or symbol of a special deity. A people keeping to such general designations of the deity, is, if not monotheistic, on the way to monotheism, and in a different position, *e.g.*, from the Assyrian Semites, who multiplied gods with the use of every appellative name. The discoveries of Assyriology have shown that a Semitic people could run to the same excess in multiplying deities as Aryan nations; and that even where the name assigned to the deity was of a general kind, he might be associated with fire, light, or heaven, as in heathen mythology. M. Renan has, therefore, now so far modified his position as to claim a monotheistic instinct for only the nomad Semitic peoples. At the same time, the feature of the nomenclature just described has to be kept in view, for it furnishes some explanation of the possibility some have found of identifying the God of the Hebrews with the gods of the surrounding nations.

The precise question for us, now, is not what might have been done, but what was actually done in times of which we have historical knowledge. We have some information as to the character ascribed to Moloch by his worshippers, and the manner in which he was worshipped. What we have to inquire is, whether the same or similar qualities were ascribed by the Israelites to their national God, and whether they paid Him similar honours, whether even the two deities were so far indented in conception as that when a Hebrew said, Our God is *Melech*, he meant to imply that Jahaveh was the same as the deity whom the heathen worshipped as Molech.

The identification or close assimilation of the two deities is supposed to be made out by a consideration of certain modes of speech, as well as of certain ceremonies or practices testified to in the Hebrew writings; by the record of certain events, obscured no doubt by popular tradition or prophetic teaching, but still intelligible; and even by unequivocal statements of the prophets themselves. We have therefore to consider the various proofs, and see whether they are substantiated by a sober exegesis of the passages which are appealed to.

(1.) To begin with certain expressions or modes of speaking of God. It is maintained that the constant application to Jahaveh of language denoting fire and light is a proof that the popular conception made Him a sun or fire God, so that He was not distinguishable from Moloch. The passages in which this mode of speech is employed, are too numerous to be quoted.¹ Kuenan adds, "They are too numerous to be looked upon as accidental, or as the result of arbitrary choice; and this is the less possible that the comparison also recurs continually beyond the prophetic literature in its narrower sense."² He then refers to the glory of the Lord being said to be like devouring fire on Sinai (Exod. xxiv. 17), to the angel appearing in a flame of fire in the bush (Exod. iii. 2), to the expressions "a consuming fire, a jealous God" (Deut. iv. 24; cf. ix. 3), and the description in the 18th Psalm

¹ A few of the more striking may be noted: Amos i. 4, 7, 10, 12, 14, ii. 2, 5, vii. 4; Hos. viii. 14; Isa. x. 17, xxix. 6, xxx. 27, xxxiii. 14,—all from *prophetic* Scriptures.

² *Relig. of Israel*, vol. i. p. 240.

of smoke going up out of His nostrils, fire out of His mouth devouring (Psalm xviii. 8), &c. He is careful to guard himself by saying¹ that of course the pious among the Israelites, in using these expressions, were aware that they spoke in metaphor, but still it is on consideration of such passages that he makes the assertion we have already quoted, "that the conception of Jahaveh originally bordered upon that of Moloch, or at least had many points of contact with it." This conclusion, however, is warrantable only if these metaphorical expressions, when originally used, were not regarded as metaphors at all, but plain statements of fact. For I do not think Kuenen means to imply that the original conception of Moloch by his worshippers was that of a spiritual being to whom they applied these expressions in a metaphorical sense. If, however, Kuenen and his school will insist upon it that metaphorical language must originally have been used as plain statement of fact, then the essential point in dispute is assumed, for we must necessarily admit that, on this concession, all religious thought at first expresses itself in language borrowed from material things; and therefore without more ado we may say that all religion begins with the worship of material things or with purely materialistic conceptions. Stade, in speaking of fetishism, says bluntly,² "Nothing on earth begins as a symbol, but is taken as a reality." I should think that the very first attempts at language are symbols, and consciously

¹ *Relig. of Israel*, vol. I. p. 241.

² *Gesch.*, vol. I. p. 405, footnote 3.

regarded as such. Language is the effort of intelligence to express itself; but if a savage makes a gesture or utters a cry, he knows quite well that that is a sign and symbol, and that it is taken by his fellow-savage as a symbol of something to be conveyed from mind to mind. It is simply impossible for man to use language in regard to religious feelings and ideas without falling into metaphor; even the current phraseology of Christianity is highly metaphorical. Will Kuenen or any of his school tell us what expressions in any language were available, when consciousness first sought to express itself on these subjects, that would not be liable to similar misapprehension? Holiness, purity, and such other expressions, in the most elevated diction that we possess, come back to be properties of matter. As regards the manifestations of Deity, with the accompaniments of thunder, lightning or fire, it is evident that if such theophanies are conceivable at all, they could have no more striking accompaniments. And as to the use of language denoting light, it need only be remarked that as the sun is the most striking object in the firmament, the one source, as it seems to the simple primitive mind, of light and warmth, pure, exalted, potent, we need not wonder that not only Moloch-worshippers, but seekers after God in all lands and in all states of education, have taken it as the image of the great and holy Being after whom they seek, and developed their religious vocabulary by ringing the changes on the phrases that denote its unique qualities. No doubt many tribes using this mode of speech have

paid reverence to the sun itself; but it requires to be proved whether this is the "original" view or an aberration; and at all events, to grant that Israel did the same, because they used the same mode of speech, would be, as has been just said, to concede the very point in dispute. The question is, To what precise time does Kuenen refer when he says that the conception of Jahaveh *originally* bordered upon that of Moloch? If it was the time when this mode of speaking of God first came into use, then we may be driven back to a primitive period when the earliest of the Semitic peoples were seeking to give expression to religious instincts; and the phraseology, so obvious in its first use, and so expressive, may have maintained itself, as it has done to our own time, without leading to misunderstanding. There is a transparent fallacy underlying all this kind of reasoning, that, if a *primary* meaning can be fixed to a term, that meaning may be held to adhere to the term at whatever time it is employed. In this way "original" meanings are attached to expressions down to the period immediately preceding the writing prophets, or even later. This school of thinkers must either tell us what kind of language *could* have been employed by a people with any spiritual perceptions at all; or they must simply declare that no people could at the outset entertain any conception of a spiritual kind, which is to beg the whole question.

(2.) An argument for the identity of Jahaveh and Moloch has been drawn from the practice of the worship of both on high places or *bamoth*; but

Kuenen¹ sees the weakness of the argument, and lays little stress upon it. For the practice is so common and obvious in all religions that it can prove nothing. In my opinion, far too much has been made of the practice in Israel, as if in itself it was more sinful to worship on hills than on plains, and as if the prophets found fault with it for the mere situation. It was the associations of the worship with heathen rites and superstitious beliefs that made it obnoxious, just as it was not sacrifice in itself but unmeaning or idolatrous sacrifice which the prophets condemned. The quiet of the mountain, its remoteness from the busy world, and its nearness to heaven, would, in any country and in any age, suggest hallowed thoughts (we cannot forget the custom of Him who went up into a mountain to pray, and spent all the night in prayer); and, given a place made sacred by religious sentiment, the aberrations of superstition are liable to follow. So the shady tree and the cool sparkling spring, in a country where shadow and refreshing water are the greatest comforts, would irresistibly make them the scene of quiet reflection, then of devotion, and then of superstition. People in our colder climates are apt to forget or ignore such things; but I believe the prophet, who re-proved the worship under green trees, came nearer to a true explanation of the origin of the worship in the hint, "because the shadow thereof is good" (Hos. iv. 13), than modern critics, with their learned disquisitions as to the tree

¹ *Relig. of Israel*, vol. 1. p. 241.

suggesting life and being the abode of a spirit or a divinity.

(3.) We come now to consider an argument for the identity of Moloch and Jahveh drawn from the observances of circumcision and the dedication of the first-born. These practices, though toned down and softened into harmless religious ceremonies, are held to be proofs that Jahveh was originally regarded as a bloodthirsty being, not the preserver of life but its destroyer, identical with Moloch. Kuenen¹ admits that he has here very little positive proof to rely upon, and even indicates certain considerations that might be construed into arguments against his own position. For instance, the account of the institution of circumcision (in Gen. xvii.) might be taken to prove that the rite was "an arbitrary symbol of dedication to Jahveh"; but this account, he says, is "late," and "we do not at all see why this particular ceremony is to serve as a token of the covenant between El-Shaddai and Abraham, together with his descendants." He also concedes that "perhaps its meaning was afterwards somewhat modified, and it was looked upon as a purification by which the Israelite was rendered fit to draw near to Jahveh. At all events, it is remarkable that in other nations of antiquity it was only performed upon the priests." The only passage, in fact, that Kuenen relies upon, is the brief passage, Exod. iv. 24-26, "When Jahveh assails Moses and seeks to kill him, his wife Zipporah circumcises her son and throws the foreskin to Jahveh, whereupon the latter

¹ *Relig. of Israel*, vol. 1, p. 238 f.

lets Moses go." The passage is very obscure, the text itself being uncertain;¹ but whatever it may mean, it cannot be taken as a proof that circumcision represents an old custom of human sacrifice. It *may* mean that an uncircumcised Hebrew was liable to death, but that is quite another thing; and it can be quite naturally construed to mean that circumcision was in its first conception—as Kuenen admits it became at a later date—a symbol of purification and dedication to Jahaveh. His admission that among other nations of antiquity it was only performed upon the priests, might have convinced him that some such idea was fundamental. Daumer as usual goes further, and maintains² that circumcision was only a milder substitution of castration, and refers to such a custom among the Hottentots. He does not, however, attempt to prove that Moloch-worshippers practised this in honour of their god; nor has any one shown that Moloch-worshippers practised even circumcision. Instead of reasoning from a single doubtful passage and general considerations, this class of writers should tell us when this precise rite took the place of human sacrifice, and why this precise rite, so unlike human sacrifice, should have been substituted—a rite which can be so obviously explained on the principle that the deity claimed the *sanctification* of life, not its destruction.

By precisely the same kind of reasoning it is sought to be made out that the dedication of the first-born

¹ For various explanations, see the Queen's Printer's Bible on the passage.

² Feuer und Molochdienst, p. 22.

to Jahaveh is a remnant of an older custom of sacrificing the first-born. Kuenen admits here again that, taken alone, the custom may be classed with the presentation of the first-fruits of the earth, as an act of acknowledgment to the bountiful Giver of all that is good, the source of all fruitfulness. But he maintains that the *historical* explanation which the Biblical writers give of the origin of the custom (though in his view it is *not* historical) is in favour of his position. At the exodus from Egypt Jahaveh slew the first-born of the Egyptians, but spared those of the Israelites, and from that period the first-born in Israel belong to Him, and are either sacrificed in His honour or ransomed from Him. This account being late, we can only conclude from it that at a later period the dedication of the first-born was brought into connection with the deliverance from the Egyptian bondage. "Yet it is probable that while this was done, the original meaning of this custom was yet adhered to as closely as possible. But in that case Jahveh appears here again as a severe being, who must be propitiated by sacrifices, and induced to waive his right to the lives of men and beasts. In other words, we have the same idea of the character of the Deity which lies at the root of the dedication of the first-born and of human sacrifice."¹ Now it must seem very strange that at a *late* time, when, according to Kuenen's view, prophetic influence would be strongly felt, an attempt should be made by bringing this custom into connection with the deliverance from Egypt, to adhere to

¹ *Relig. of Israel*, vol. I. p. 239 f.

the original meaning of the custom, and under the guise of an unhistorical story as to the slaughter of Egypt's first-born to explain how a rite of long standing in Israel was originally a custom of sacrificing their first-born. Here again it would be more to the point to tell us when the substitution of the milder for the more cruel rite took place, and why, the milder rite having established itself (presumably as a better), the effort should have been made to keep alive the remembrance of one that was cruel and long obsolete. Kuenen says truly, that in regard to both this custom and that of circumcision we should look for a reference to the nature of the deity to whom they were rendered as religious acts. Now, in both cases the ceremonies are quite as reconcilable with the nature of a deity who was the giver and defender of life, as with that of one who was its destroyer, and in this connection the parallel custom of offering the first-fruits of the earth should not be overlooked. Moreover, there is not only the nature of the deity to be considered, but the effect upon the mind of the worshipper. And both rites, if taken as symbolical of the consecration to God of the first and best that man has, are not only quite in keeping with all the Scriptural indications which we possess, and consistent with those obscure references on which Kuenen proceeds, but even very significant as religious acts and means of religious education. The thing we want to prove is the nature of the deity revered in these services. The services in themselves do not suggest a deity of a repulsive character, who is the enemy of life, but are thoroughly in

keeping with the character of a deity such as the Hebrew prophets represented their national God to be. The rites themselves, confessedly at the time of which we have historical knowledge, had the more beneficent associations.

(4.) We next come to consider the argument drawn from certain records of alleged events, which, though obscured or misinterpreted by the narrators, give evidence, it is said, that human sacrifice to Jahveh was an original custom in Israel, and that therefore the God of Israel was no other than Moloch, or at all events a deity of similar character.

We begin with the account given in Gen. xxii. of Abraham's offering of his son Isaac, which is much relied upon in this connection.¹ And, not to take an extreme representation of the view, let us hear the rather moderate statement of the argument by Kuenen:² "The well-known narrative of Abraham's offering . . . does not by any means recommend human sacrifice, but the disposition evinced in the sacrifice of a child, the readiness to give up even the most precious object to Jahveh, is highly extolled by the author (vers. 16-18); if Jahveh does not wish that disposition to be confirmed by the deed itself, still by his unqualified praise he makes known that it is no more than just and appropriate, and that what he does not desire he *could* demand from his servant." Now it seems to me that though we admit all that Kuenen here says, we are as far as ever from establishing the existence of the custom of human

¹ Daumer, p. 34 ff.

² Rellg. of Israel, vol. I. p. 237.

sacrifice; and when he proceeds, "we are not surprised, therefore, that human sacrifice appears as an element of the bull-worship in the kingdom of the ten tribes," there is no connection between his premises and his conclusion. We are, to be sure, warranted in concluding from the narrative, that the narrator knew what was meant by the offering of human sacrifice, and that he means to convey to us that Abraham understood by it the offering of the very dearest possession to Jahaveh. But we ask, if such offerings were the custom in the writer's day, as Daumer would assert, or if it was the common practice in the Abrahamic stage of worship, why does the writer make so much of the one instance of it, and record it as a singular triumph of devotion? If we may be allowed for a moment to suppose that there is historical truth in the narrative (in other words, to put ourselves in the position of the narrator), we should say that the whole story exhibits not only the faith of the patriarch, but part of his education in the spiritual character of his God. Education by contrast is one of the most effective kind, and the Biblical writers make us familiar with it by their various references to the religious beliefs and practices of the peoples around Israel, and in such injunctions as, "So shall ye not do to Jahaveh your God." To Abraham, not unfamiliar with various ways in which among his heathen ancestors the deity was propitiated, the testing question comes, "Art thou prepared to obey thy God as fully as the people about thee obey their gods?" and in the putting forth of his faith in the act of obedience, he learns that the

nature of his God is different.¹ Instead, therefore, of saying that the narrative gives proof of the existence of human sacrifice as an early custom in Israel, it is more reasonable to regard it as giving an explanation why it was that, from early time, this had been a prime distinction of Israel that human sacrifice *was not practised* as among the heathen. The fundamental idea of the heathen rite was the same as that which lay at the foundation of Hebrew ordinance, *the best to God*; but by presenting to us this story of the offering of Isaac, and by presenting it in this precise form, the writer simply teaches the same truth taught by all the prophets, that to obey is better than sacrifice—in other words, that the God worshipped in Israel from Abraham's time was a God who did not delight in destroying life, but in saving and sanctifying it.

Just as little, I think, does the story of Jephthah (Judges xi.) and his daughter prove that human sacrifice was the custom in Israel at the time of the Judges² or at any time. Even if we admit that Jephthah contemplated the possibility or probability of a member of his household being the first to come out to meet him—even if we admit that when he “did with her according to his vow which he had vowed” (v. 39), he actually offered her as a sacrifice,—I maintain that by any sober criticism of the

¹ In a similar manner, in the story of Abraham's intercession for the cities of the plain, he is taught the merciful character of the God to whom he prays. It is a shallow view of this narrative to represent it as a huckstering proceeding, in which the suppliant beats down the deity to the lowest point. The story illustrates the Christian truth, “According to your faith it shall be done to you,” for as long as Abraham has faith to pray he is answered.

² Daumer, p. 40 ff.

passage, nothing is proved beyond the solitary act. No doubt we must admit that Jephthah may have been acquainted with human sacrifice as practised by the nations about him. The writer of the narrative, if we place him in the early "literary age" of Israel, could not but have known of it. But all the details of the narrative, all the circumstances associated with the event—the sadness and grief of the father, the pause before the execution of the vow, the annual ceremony of a four days' lament for Jephthah's daughter—show that the thing was regarded as quite unusual, and had stamped itself in the national mind as an occurrence rare in history. Possibly, nay probably, a certain glory encircled the name of Jephthah's daughter for her extraordinary devotion, but this was just because the devotion *was* extraordinary, not because it was an instance of a common usage. It is idle in such a connection to talk of this as a proof that the Mosaic law forbidding human sacrifice was not known to Jephthah. Such a law, or a hundred similar, may have existed and not been known to this Gileadite chieftain; but even if the law was known, he was not in a mood to regulate his actions by such considerations. The man was burning with passion for revenge, and to nerve himself to his utmost effort, he bound himself by the most solemn vow he could think of. Thenceforth, when the victory was secured, there was no question, to a superstitious man, of Mosaic laws—nay, he repressed his strongest human instincts; but the act was not, as our critics would make us believe, the performance of an ordinary rite

to a bloodthirsty God. Jephthah's god for the time was his own feeling of revenge and injured pride, and his law was the *honour* and sacredness of the vow.

We have still to refer to another passage. It is related¹ that the King of Moab, sore pressed by the allied armies of Israel and Judah and Edom, and having failed in an attempt "to break through unto the King of Edom," "took his eldest son that should have reigned in his stead, and offered him for a burnt-offering upon the wall. And there was great indignation against Israel, and they departed from him and returned to their own land." The passage has been variously explained, and in different ways an argument has been drawn from it to prove that Moloch and Jehovah were identical, or that the tone of Israel's belief in their God was as low as that of the Moabites. Daumer, *e.g.*, who takes the lowest possible view, says, "This offering, according to the Biblical representation of it, worked so effectually that the besiegers had to withdraw." And as the word translated "indignation" is the word used of the divine wrath, he goes on to say, "There came a great wrath of Jehovah upon Israel and drove them away, so that the God to whom the Moabite prince presented this horrible offering, evidently coincides with the Biblical Jehovah, and the power and effectiveness which such sacrifices had with Jehovah lie before our eyes as recognised

¹ 2 Kings iii. 26-27. This passage is also referred to in another connection as a proof that the power of Jahweh was confined to his own land, and that beyond its boundaries the gods of the respective nations were more powerful.—Staats, Geschichte, vol. 4. p. 430.

by the Bible itself."¹ Others explain the passage to mean that the wrath of the Moabite god, called forth by this costly appeal to him, was aroused, and proved so effective that Israel had the worst of the battle; and that under the obscure phraseology the Hebrew writer indicated, what he would not say outright, that Jahaveh was not a match, on this occasion, for the Moabite god on Moabite territory. I confess I do not know what precisely the passage means;² the multiplicity of interpretations given of it is a proof how obscure it is. But to attempt to explain it with this perpetual insinuation that the Biblical writers have something to conceal, is to come to it with a prepossession, and seems to me to be fatal to any satisfactory exegesis. The writer, if he was so afraid of compromising the dignity of the national god, could have omitted the reference altogether, or safeguarded the national faith in a less ambiguous manner. This is not an instance of a writer finding a very ancient document, and having to gloss it over to conceal its original meaning. The time referred to is in the historical period; and the writer was under the influence of prophetic ideas, and was not likely to express, in this hesitating and doubtful way, the convictions of his time as to the relative power of Jahaveh and heathen gods.

(5.) As little convincing is the argument drawn from statements of the prophets. One passage, indeed, is so convincing to Daumer,³ that he says it

¹ Feuer und Molochdienst, p. 46.

² It is supposed by many that there may be an obscure reference to this occurrence, whatever it was, in Amos ii. 1.

³ Feuer und Molochdienst, p. 47 ff.

“shatters all our traditional theology with one blow.” It is the passage in Amos (v. 25 f.) which Daumer interprets to mean that “Israel, during all the forty years long in the wilderness, did not serve Jehovah, but Saturn-Kijjun, as their king (Melech, Molech, Moloch).” Such a distinct declaration, he says,¹ should be seriously faced, and he complains that only in his own time (1842) had writers begun to give their due weight to such prophetic utterances, and in this way to lay the foundations of an entirely new history of the Old Testament. In point of fact, from Vatke² onwards, critical scholars have relied very strongly on this passage in support of their views. Kuenen may be taken as a moderate exponent of the argument. He says,³ “The prophet Amos states that the Israelites carried about in the desert ‘the tabernacle [or some other object: the reading is uncertain] of their king,’ or ‘Melech,’ and other idolatrous apparatus besides. This statement may be regarded as historical. At their entrance into Canaan the Israelites found there the worship of a deity to whom children were sacrificed (Deut. xii. 30, 31; 2 Kings xvi. 3. Comp. Levit. xviii. 21; xx. 2-5), probably likewise called Melech. It may be assumed that the Israelitish Melech-worship became fused with the Canaanitish, and that thus from the time of their entrance into Canaan this worship existed, and the sacrifice of children to Melech occurred sporadically. The worship of Melech, however, was of no great importance.”

¹ Feuer und Moloehdienst, p. 49.

² Bibl. Theol., p. 191.

³ Relig. of Israel, vol. i. p. 250.

With this last statement Daumer would not agree; but, letting that pass, it is worth while drawing attention to the readiness with which all this school accepts as "historical" a statement of the prophet Amos in regard to a time of which, in other connections, they are fond of telling us, he could have had no knowledge whatever; and it is somewhat peculiar to find writers who tell us that there was no forty years' wandering in the desert at all, accepting the testimony of Amos in regard to the religious practices of a time which he so precisely defines. Again, a favorite proceeding with the modern school, when a passage is inconvenient for their theory, is to say that it has been touched by later hands, or that it disturbs the connection, and therefore is to be rejected as an interpolation. The English reader may look at the passage before us in its connection and see whether it is not particularly one of that description. Yet we never hear from the critics a word against its genuineness. I do not mean to cast suspicion on it on that account, or to dispute Kuenen's assertion that the statement of the prophet "may be regarded as historical." My difficulty is that, as the various interpretations of the passage will show, one can scarcely make out what the statement precisely is.¹ And whatever it may be, the question arises, If this Moloch-worship was the recognised national worship of Israel in the desert, why should Amos make that a matter of reproach, as he seems to do? To which the only reply can be the usual one. The prophet, from his

¹ See Note XIX.

prophetical standpoint, projected his own ideas into the past, and gives us an unhistorical view of the religion,—the same prophet who in the same breath is taken as a proof of a historical statement to the very opposite effect. I do not suppose modern criticism can go much further. If it be urged that Amos merely states that this Moloch-worship was practised in the desert, then who is to deny that? The Biblical historians represent the religious life of Israel at that time as far from correct; and it is they who tell us plainly of the practice of Moloch-worship in the time of the Kings. But it is a fiction of modern writers that this worship was ever regarded by prophetic men, or by the best of the nation, as the national worship of Israel.

There is still the famous passage in Micah vi. 6, 7: “Wherewithal shall I come before Jahaveh? . . . Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?” in which, says Kuenen, “it is undoubtedly implied that in his days such a sacrifice was not looked upon as at all unreasonable; . . . if human sacrifice had been foreign to the service of Israel’s God, he could not have mentioned it in this manner.”¹ Daumer goes further: “In these words is expressed without doubt the prevailing belief to be that Jehovah has pleasure not only in animal sacrifices but also in human offerings, and that in the offering of a first-born son there was the efficacy of wiping out sin. . . . Israel worships its Jehovah with burnt-offerings, calves of a year old, rams, oil, and the offering

¹ *Relig. of Israel*, vol. i. p. 237.

of first-born sons, and believes that this is necessary for salvation and in accordance with Jehovah's will and law;"¹ and in a footnote he blames Gramberg for still adhering to the old belief that the custom of offering children had passed over from the Moloch-worship to that of Jehovah. It is difficult to place one's self in the mental attitude of one who can reason in this way, or to understand how to such a one the rhetoric of a Hebrew writer can have any force. The prophet propounds a most solemn question—How is man to find acceptance with God?—and his answer² takes the form of a climax in which he rises from the idea of a costly to that of a still costlier offering, and, as Kuenen rightly observes, he knows that there is a better way than by any such sacrifice. To Daumer it may be replied, if the offering of children was as common as the offering of rams and oil, why does the prophet make all this ado about it? The prophet has no idea of *ordinary* offerings in his mind. Does Daumer mean to tell us that it was the common thing for an individual offerer, in order to atone for sin, to offer *thousands* of rams, and *ten thousand rivers* of oil? It is on these points that the emphasis lies; and it is these that give force to the grand climax, shall I give my *first-born* for my transgression? The prophet supposes the very highest form conceivable of sacrifice, and declares that it is all in vain. And the proper conclusion to be drawn from his word

¹ Feuer und Molochdienst, p. 52.

² It may be pointed out that the passage, standing in connection with v. 5, may be taken as expressing, dramatically, a question put by Balak (vv. 6, 7), with Balaam's answer (v. 8).

is, that no sacrifice in itself is pleasing to Jahaveh, not even the most costly that could be conceived. But it is asked, Why does he instance this kind of offering if he did not know of it? The answer is, He did know of it, but he did not know of it as a thing done to Jahaveh, any more than he knew of ten thousands of rivers of oil being offered. Is there no such thing as rhetoric for our critics? When St. Paul, in one of his most eloquent flights, says, "Though I give all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, I am nothing," are we to conclude that the early Christians of his day, having as at Pentecost given all their goods to a common fund, were also in the habit of worshipping this same fiery Moloch? One would say there was less reason for St. Paul making such a rhetorical supposition of self-immolation in his day than for Micah, with Moloch-worshippers around him, making it in his. But in neither case is the custom proved, and there is absolutely nothing more in the critical argument from the words of Micah than an aggravating attempt to spoil one of the finest passages of sacred oratory.

It is unnecessary to enter into lengthened examination of other passages relied upon in this connection, such as David's slaughter of Saul's descendants to appease the Gibeonites (2 Sam. xxi. 1-14), and Samuel's hewing Agag in pieces before the Lord in Gilgal (1 Sam. xv. 33). The general remark may be made, that by themselves they are not even so plausible as the cases already stated, and like these do

not really touch the point in dispute.¹ Kuenen, feeling that such passages as have been considered do not yield a decisive result for his view, makes the remark:² "A solitary instance of this nature would perhaps be susceptible of another interpretation; in their interdependence these various facts undoubtedly bear witness to the accuracy of the conclusion advanced above;" and it is a favourite method with writers of his school to speak of the argument as cumulative. It is a very specious plea, and I believe more are led by it to give their adherence to the modern theory than by any one positive and conclusive proof. Seeing that so many passages and references can be made to lend countenance to the theory, they come to the conclusion that "there must be something in it," and are vaguely convinced or half persuaded. Yet we are familiar with the similar marshalling of evidence in favour of all kinds of extravagant theories. The individual proofs have no force till the theory to be proved is thrown into the balance, although an opposing theory would equally well act as counterpoise, or even suit better. Before there can be cumulative evidence, there must rest in each individual case a presumption, and two cases must not *mutually* supplement one another, unless it is a cumulus of unsupported suspicions. We know how in social life the iteration of a calumny is supported by innumerable little incidents, not one of which in itself has any positive value, but all, strung together on the string of whispered slander, suffice by their

¹ See Note XX.

² Relig. of Israel, vol. I. p. 237.

cumulative evidence to ruin a character. It is necessary to protest against such a mode of reasoning, because it is apt to sap the very foundations of exegesis on which alone any positive result must rest. When Daumer, for example, in his effort to establish his thesis, draws proofs from the practices of nations at the most remote distances from one another, and in the most diverse stages of culture, and forces the most natural usages of language into evidences for his view, one is led to despair of the possibility of getting any reliable conclusion at all from the Biblical writings. For him it is sufficient that there is a river in Macedon and a river in Monmouth, and that there is salmon in both. But his mode of procedure brings Biblical exegesis into contempt: and it is a pity that more modern writers have not been warned by his example not to enter upon a line of reasoning which manifestly ends in absurdity. Surely in the examination of a problem so very delicate and so very vital, it is becoming to proceed with the utmost caution. If a passage called as evidence is seen to have no direct force, when calmly interpreted in the light of the context, the witness should simply be made to stand down, and not be again appealed to. It should not be beneath the dignity of a critic to say frankly that a passage, whether from the condition of the text or from our ignorance of its reference, is neutral or unintelligible, so that attention may be concentrated on less ambiguous proofs.

After all their bold pretensions, therefore, to prove that the pre-prophetic religion of Israel was

of the low character affirmed of it, the critics, it seems to me, succeed in proving very little. They have done valuable service in drawing attention to popular conceptions or misconceptions; and had their labours been confined to this as a contribution of our knowledge of the working of the religious instinct at all times, they would have been excellent. This indiscriminate mixing up of early and late, however, which is seen in the reasoning from metaphorical language and so-called mythological expressions, defeats the very end of the argument, which is to show development. And there is ever the objection to the whole argument, that it assumes a tone of prevailing thought on religious matters at the very time of the first writing prophets, which is inconsistent with the tone in which these men write, and directly in the teeth of the declarations which they make on the whole subject.

Finally, however, the modern historians should beware of attempting to prove too much in this direction; for the more the pre-prophetic religion is depreciated, the more difficult it will be to account for its sudden rise to the level in which we find it in the earliest writing prophets. There is not only the task of accounting for the continuance of Israel as a separate people, with distinctive beliefs and practices, during the long period that this low stage lasted, but there is the greater difficulty of showing how, from the low level which is assumed, it was possible for the religion by ordinary development to rise to the ethic monotheism in which it so soon appears. Granted even that the case for the

modern theory has been so far made out, what was there at all in the religion of Jahaveh to make it a distinctive religion of Israel, and to give to that people the only bond that could unite them to one another, and mark them off from their neighbours? Or if that is not enough, what was there to enable them to rise, as they did rise, from this low level to the height of the so-called ethic monotheism? And how was it that, with the first appearance of written prophecy, we find the teaching of a much purer faith, appealing also to a hoary antiquity for its sanction?

We must therefore now inquire particularly what was this Jahaveh religion, and how its subsistence for so long and its rise to its purest form are accounted for.

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